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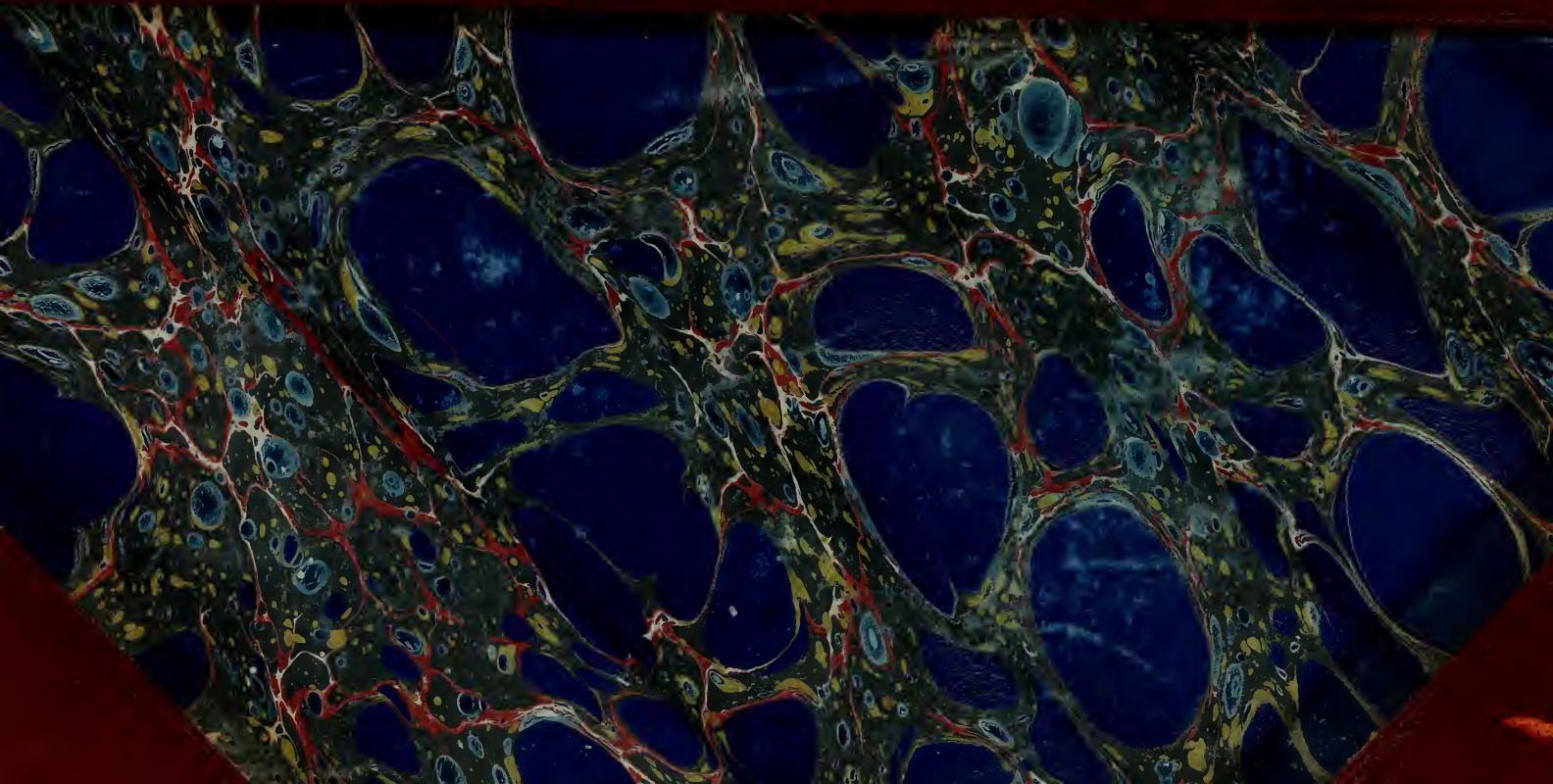

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M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXIII.

January to June, 1877.

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THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE RAILWAY STATION.

IT was a cold, bright February morning in Paris, and the bustle of departure by the mail-train for Calais was at its height at the Station du Nord. At the time of which we speak—some years ago—this was no light matter to encounter. If ever there was a place in which the nervous, inexperienced passenger would be apt to look longingly back to the comparative comfort of railways at home, it was this same Station du Nord in those days. The penning up at first, the rush afterwards, the worry with luggage, the extortion of porters, might all have been a joke to those with strength, and spirits, and money; but were real trials to those without.

On the morning in question there was a young English passenger, who, though deficient neither in courage nor in hopefulness, felt, for a few moments, with almost bitter despair, her inability to hold her own without a protector in that impatient, struggling crowd.

A thin, pale girl, plainly and insufficiently clad, and, to judge by the sharpness of her features, no less insufficiently fed, she might have hoped, at least, to escape observation by insignificance; and it was no small addition to her troubles to find herself the subject of insolent comment audibly uttered by one young commis to another, as they manœuvred to keep near her that they might divert themselves at her expense.

One of the two she knew by sight, and had reason to dislike and avoid; and in her terror and agitation, omitting to be on her guard, she was presently hustled in the crowd, and nearly thrown down—her fall only arrested by the strong arm of an Englishman, against whom

she was flung. He caught and supported her with an expression of concern and apology, as if it had been his fault; and seeing the two young men laughing, as he thought very impertinently, gave them a look of warning which was like a gleam of light to the poor young traveller. She tried to thank him, but the fright had almost deprived her of speech; and his compassion moved him to ask if he could be of use—should he get her ticket, as the crowd was still pushing round the bureau? Gratefully she accepted the offer, explaining that she was going second-class.

"So are we," was his reply. "I will take four places instead of three."

Without waiting for her money, he worked his way among the throng by an easy, scarcely apparent effort of strength, accomplished his object, and returned.

"If you will show me your luggage, we will have it weighed at once," said he, giving her his arm; and again, she knew not how, the crowd seemed to divide before him, and her little matters were arranged without the smallest difficulty. Her two persecutors kept aloof, but she saw they were on the watch, and she dreaded being removed from this friendly protection. He had paid for both her tickets, and remunerated as many porters as he thought necessary, and with trembling hands she felt for her purse to refund him. Horror! the purse was gone! That hustle had been too favourable an opportunity; and with a deadly sickness at her heart, which showed itself in her face at once, she realised that she had not a penny in the world.

"My purse is gone!" was all she could say.

The Englishman understood the pitiful case in a moment. His manner and voice seemed to soften involuntarily as he asked if she had any friends near, or if she preferred going on. Between her sobs, she gasped out that she had no friends, except the one she was going to in London, and that it was everything to her to get there without delay. What was she to do?

"I have not another farthing, to pay you, or for the rest of my journey," was her piteous confession, and her tears flowed the while, all the faster for her effort to stop them.

The English gentleman—for such he undeniably was—after a moment's hesitation, made a quick sign with his hand, and two persons, apparently his own travelling companions or attendants, advanced immediately. He spoke to one of them in a low tone, and the three stood round the forlorn stranger, looking at her with a mixture of compassion and perplexity that, in spite of her distress, struck her as rather comical. The natural consequence to a girl of seventeen—hungry, tired, and with a lively imagination—was that in the midst of her crying she began to laugh. It was so miserable, and yet so ridiculous—so like a horrible dream! Her laugh, however, seemed to settle the matter; for a responsive smile broke over all the

faces at once, and her first friend, offering her his arm, observed that if they did not start directly they should all be late together.

"You must put up with your loss, I am afraid," he said, kindly. "You would only lose your time as well as your money by stopping to give information about it now. Leave it all to us. We will take care of you. Joel, push through and secure four places, second class. Quick!"

The tallest of the three, a powerful figure in a velveteen coat, touched his cap respectfully, and obeyed. "Martin!" continued the first, "here." And the dark-visaged, black-bearded individual thus addressed, without further explanation, appropriated the carpet-bag, shawl, and umbrella, which, with one sparely-filled trunk, constituted the whole of the world's gear now belonging to Alice Kerr.

She, meanwhile, still feeling as if in a dream, though one that began to improve a little, clung to the strong, friendly arm of her protector, and suffered him to arrange everything as he pleased; finding herself presently seated opposite to him in a railway carriage —the other two quickly following with their light luggage and hers. No fear of any malicious commis molesting her now.

"Well," she thought, to herself, when she could think at all, "this has been a wretched beginning, certainly; and I must appear a perfect idiot to these good men. How exceedingly kind they are! I should not mind how far I had to go with them to take care of me. But how horrified old Madame would be if she knew! and how I am to pay that generous one for my ticket, I cannot conceive. I dare not offer him my poor little watch, even if it were worth offering; and perhaps I ought not to have accepted such a kindness from a stranger— but what was I to do?—and how am I to live in London without money, if I find no one there?"

Perhaps the troubled nature of her reflections betrayed itself to her opposite neighbour; for, after allowing her a little time to recover from her agitation, he leaned forward with his arms on his knees, and expressed a kindly hope that she was not fretting over her misfortune.

"If you had been such a traveller as I have," he said, "you would think nothing of the loss of a purse. I have known what it was to be nearly starved, half dead with thirst, and thoroughly done up with fatigue. All the money in the world would not have helped me. And when I did at last light on a stockman's hut, I should indeed have been surprised if he had not made me welcome to whatever he had. If I had come across you then, just sitting down to your tea, I should have expected you to fill up my pannikin first."

"I would, indeed," she answered earnestly.

"Of course. It is traveller's law, and holds equally good everywhere. So I was going to say, if you will just fancy yourself in the Australian bush, instead of on the Calais railway, and that we are all part of one caravan, you will not mind our taking care of you, till you meet your friends. I would give you my card, but I am ashamed

to say, I have not such a thing about me. My name, however, is Bruce—may I ask yours?"

"Alice Kerr," said she, gathering courage from his kindness. "You may perhaps know, you may have heard of my father, the artist ——"

"Kerr? To be sure I have. He lives still, I hope? Ah!" as she shook her head sadly, with a glance at her rusty black, "that is beyond my power of offering comfort; but a name like his, remember, lives long after him. It belongs to his country. I hope the gift remains among his descendants."

"I—I do something in that way," returned Alice, blushing, but gratified. "And I have some of his last drawings with me, that have never been exhibited."

"You have? and you are melancholy over the loss of a few napoleons? Why, one stroke of his brush is worth as much again. We must look sharp after our luggage, to see that no French rogue gets them, as well as the purse."

"That is just what I have been struggling for," was her reply. "The French got too many of them, and I was determined to starve rather than let them have these."

"You were quite right. I understood you to say that you cultivated the art yourself?"

"I have tried—I am going to London now, in hopes of becoming an artist, as my father was."

"Indeed!" There was a touch of pity in his voice. "But you have friends in London, have you not?"

"I hope to find one—perhaps two."

"And if they are not to be found?"

"Then I don't exactly know what I shall do. I thought I had money enough to live upon for a week or two, till I had procured employment."

"Do you know London at all?"

"I have been there twice," she said, rather exultingly.

He shook his head with a smile, and at that moment, the train, which was behind its time, moved on, stopping all conversation for the present.

There were several passengers in the carriage besides themselves, one of whom was an infirm gentleman, in green spectacles and a brown wig, who climbed in with difficulty, and sank into his corner as if quite exhausted. His entry attracted the notice of Mr. Bruce's dark-faced companion, Martin, who turned to the former, with a muttered, "Seems fond of our company. Thought we'd dropped him!" Bruce made some good-humoured reply, and nothing further passed. But it struck Alice Kerr that Mr. Martin was by no means satisfied, and it caused her to observe how quietly, but pertinaciously, he kept a watch on the infirm passenger's movements. Let him doze, snore, cough, take snuff, or sigh, it was all noted by the keen eyes,

gleaming from beneath dark, projecting brows, such as Alice thought might have belonged to one of Cooper's heroic Indians—in whom, happily for her, she firmly believed. And one fancy leading on to another, she began to conjecture vigorously, who and what these unknown friends-in-need could be.

"I know what I would make them," she thought to herself, during some of the long intervals of travel, when talking, unless at the highest pitch of the voice, was out of the question; "I know what I would make them, if only a grand picture had been bespoken by some liberal man, and I could persuade the three to sit to me, in proper dresses and things. They are just what Cattermole liked, or Gilbert would draw—knight, squire, and yeoman; that big, honest-looking Joel, with a mighty bow and sheaf of arrows, carrying his master's helmet and lance—and dark Mr. Martin, with those glittering eyes of his, a finished esquire, perfect in all that appertains to chivalry, and burnt almost black in the eastern sun; and my kind friend and cavalier, an Ivanhoe, or a Kenneth, or something as good, returning to wed the lady of his affections, if she will have him—and very stupid she must be if she won't. I wonder if I could manage it—or if I shall remember their faces well enough. They were made to be painted together, I am sure."

Her mind was busily at work at once, planning the composition of the picture; and Gabriel Bruce, who from time to time glanced at her over his newspaper, was glad to perceive her face improve in serenity.

"Poor little soul!" he thought, in his turn, "it is too bad that a young thing like that should be knocked about the world. It is lucky she is not pretty enough to attract much notice. I must mind what I am about, but even Mrs. Grundy could not object to a man's helping a forlorn English girl out of such a predicament. A fellow who wouldn't, ought to be kicked, and I would be the first to lend him an elastic toe. What an odd face it is, all nose and cheekbone, as if she had never had enough to eat—by no means unlikely, for Kerr, they used to say, was a genuine Bohemian, and I'll be bound his daughter's wants came second to smoke and beer. She will look a queer figure in London, I am afraid; but she shall not starve while she is under my escort, at any rate."

He kept his resolve; for as soon as the train stopped at the refreshment station, he took Alice out without the form of asking consent, hurried her into the salle-à-manger, and had a plate of hot cutlets and fried potatoes placed before her in a moment.

"You must eat, for the good of the human race in general," he said, as he poured her out a glass of Bordeaux. "Don't stop to talk, for though you have plenty of time for duty, there is none to waste on amusement. Don't trouble yourself about your traps; Joel will see to them; it is his vocation. He served in the Land Transport Corps before I knew him."

By this time he was attacking a similar plate to her own, and the contagion of his cheerful spirits spreading to hers, she gave herself up to the enjoyment of satisfying a hunger keen enough from long fasting, after months of more or less privation, to make the cuisine of the buffet appear delicious. All scruples about accepting his courtesy had vanished, and he settled for both as a matter of course. How the others refreshed themselves she did not perceive; but they found Martin in his place when they returned, and she suspected he had never left it; any more than the infirm gentleman, who only shook his head, and coughed distressingly when questioned.

"There are still a few minutes to spare, sir," said Gabriel, good-naturedly; "would you like me to fetch you a glass of wine? It is not at all bad."

The invalid made an effort to speak; but his cough returning with increased violence, he only bowed his thanks, and held up a box of lozenges by way of explanation.

Gabriel bowed in return, and took up his newspaper; but the smile that passed over the face of the dark esquire was such as Alice would have given anything to transfer to paper at once. What could it mean?

In due time they reached Calais, where our young traveller had expected difficulties without end. But she found there were to be none for her now. Her matters were all arranged, without her having anything to do with them, and she was handed to a seat on the deck of the steamer by Mr. Bruce, and fenced from the cold with the united wraps of the party, who seemed all three quite indifferent to season or climate. The elastic spirits of seventeen could not be depressed under such circumstances, especially as she felt all the better for her good luncheon. The motion of the steamer across a lively sea, which is fatal to so many, was delightful to her; and a sensation of enjoyment, to which she had long been a stranger, took the place of the perpetual fret and vexation, which, of late, had only alternated with the dread of worse to come.

Her history is soon told. What Gabriel Bruce had imagined was very near the truth. An only child, early left motherless, she had gone about with her father, wherever his roving tastes led him; at one period, when he made a strenuous effort, for her sake, to earn a regular living by tuition, accompanying him to the schools he attended, and for a short time boarding at one of them. At this particular school, Alice had formed the friendship on which she was now building a castle of hope—a friendship of which she had already received substantial proof, though the lovely girl at the head of the class, of whom Stephen Kerr was so proud, and who had made such a pet of his little Alice, was now grown into a woman, and they might not know each other when they met.

Mr. Kerr's struggle only lasted a few years; he sank into old deteriorating habits, and finally quitted England to try his fortune in

Paris. There, as artist, working for picture-dealers, or as professor of drawing in third-rate schools, he contrived to live a few years longer; his daughter's education meanwhile progressing as might have been expected under the circumstances. Very early she learned the practical lesson, that if she wanted anything, she had better earn it—for the gratification of a wish, however reasonable, was dearly bought with the misery of an additional debt, of which her father thought nothing. She had, accordingly, been in the habit of giving tuition in drawing in return for French and music at one of the schools alluded to; and when Stephen Kerr's death, after a very short illness, left her in Paris alone, she was fain to accept a proposal to board at the school, and make herself generally useful as a kind of pupil-teacher.

Drudgery as this proved to be, she would have endured the hardships for the sake of the shelter longer than many girls of her age—being endowed with all the perseverance and resolution that her father had so grievously lacked; but circumstances were, at last, too powerful. The dealer, to whom Mr. Kerr, at considerable loss, had consigned many of his later works, tried to cajole the young girl out of the few he had left behind him; and on her refusal to sell them for the twentieth part of their market value, thought he had only to starve her a little, and she would bring them to him of her own accord.

A few hints were given to Madame about the reckless character of the father, and insinuations made about the training of the daughter; and when Madame thought it her duty, in consequence, to make a speech to the English girl on the subject of propriety of behaviour, Alice fired up in great wrath, declaring that English people were a great deal better than French, and that M. Barbès was neither more nor less than a robber and cheat. So it ended in notice to quit—a notice allowing of no time for hesitation or correspondence. Alice must go forth, and seek her fortune where she could, with the certainty of having at least one strong enemy—if not two.

In this forlorn plight, her single hope was in the school friend of her childhood—the beautiful Edith Leicester—from whom, as she knew, her father had several times received help, though she was not aware how often her liberality had been appealed to. With a few pounds in her purse and the precious pictures in her trunk, she resolved to go by the quickest route to London, and throw herself on the young lady's kindness. Her first step in that direction had been disastrous, but like many disasters that seem without remedy, hers had brought compensation with it in the unlooked-for courtesy of strangers; and as she sat on the deck of the steamer, rolled up in rugs and wrappers, her spirits rose superior to both past and future. Mr. Bruce, when he sauntered up to inquire after her comfort, was agreeably surprised by the cheerfulness of the response.

"You seem a good sailor," he remarked, sitting down by her side.

"This fresh breeze has sent most of us below. I miss my two comrades, and they have been pretty well seasoned, like myself. You do not appear to mind it at all."

"I think it is just delicious," said Alice. "I should like the passage to last six weeks!"

He smiled, and shook his head, as if he could not echo the sentiment.

"You have not had so much of this sort of thing as I have," he returned, good humouredly, "or you might be glad to think England was so near."

"Have you been long away?"

"Five years—the day after to-morrow."

"Ah, I have been longer than that."

"And you are in no hurry to return now?"

"Oh, I don't mind returning. I was only thinking what a rest this was, and how kind you were—and that I must not expect such good fortune always. I shall rough it in London, of course," said Alice, whose knowledge of light literature, British and foreign, was extensive enough to furnish her memory with numerous harrowing scenes, illustrating the terrors of the metropolis, but always with a triumphant termination. "I know a little about roughing it already," added she, with a sincerity that touched the hearer. "If you had had to teach unruly French children, and please suspicious French teachers, and keep the peace with an ill-tempered bonne into the bargain, who misrepresented everything you did, you would not wonder at my enjoying a holiday, even though it has cost me my purse."

"Well, it might make a difference, certainly—but I was thinking more of your future than of your past. You know where to go when you reach London, I hope."

"Yes, luckily I have the address here, for I lost the card in my porte-monnaie."

She showed him a torn scrap of paper, on which was just legible the direction required.

"Miss Leicester,
Hartley Carroll, Esq.,
17, Greville Gardens,
South Kensington."

Mr. Bruce read it attentively, and was silent a few minutes before he observed, "When I left England, there were two Miss Leicesters, and Sir Matthew was still living. Which of them is this?"

"Oh, this is my friend Edith; Mrs. Carroll is the younger one, Clare. She married three years ago. I believe her husband is very rich. Papa used to say that Sir Matthew would never give consent to his daughters' marrying anyone who had not plenty of money."

"Clare married!" repeated he, drawing a long breath, "and to Hartley Carroll! Yes, there must be a good income there, and if her

father thought that essential to her happiness, he was not wrong in making it a condition."

"No, indeed; and perhaps it is very mercenary in me, but I do think it must be much pleasanter. I have no romance about poverty —I would much rather have the income."

"So would the Miss Leicesters, no doubt."

"I don't know about Clare; she was always a funny girl, and very pretty, but I never knew or cared for her as I did for Edith. I have never seen anyone like her, anywhere. They were both kind to me, you know, when I was a little child at school with them, and Clare often gave me bonbons and cake. But Edith was more like a real friend, and papa admired her very much, and confided some of his troubles to her; and she promised him she would be a friend to me when I wanted one."

"What do you expect her to do for you?"

"I don't know; but if she will put me in the way of getting my own living as an artist, *that* is what I should like best; and perhaps she may find someone to make a good offer for the pictures. I know old Barbès, and the rest of them, cheated poor papa over and over again; but they shall not have these so cheap, if I go to the workhouse first."

"I should like to have a sight of them myself. I used to be a collector of water-colours, in a small way. Will you give me the refusal of one of them, when you have had them valued?"

"How good you are!" said Alice, earnestly. "I am afraid you are only doing this out of kindness. You cannot really want pictures, just as you arrive from Australia."

"I do not see the force of that argument. Australia is a grand country, but by no means satisfying as an emporium of high art. I myself kept a store for six months, under a signboard of my own devising—design, pigments, brushes, and all—so I am qualified to speak with authority. Remember, then, I claim first choice, and meanwhile, I am your banker on account—only, until we are obliged to part, I had better carry the purse for both."

"How good you are!" she again exclaimed, and held out her hand, with the long thin fingers breaking through the worn-out black glove. He took it kindly and respectfully, and she felt it was a true knight's palm that met her own. She would have gone anywhere, done anything, holding that firm and loyal hand; and she was silent for some little time after it was withdrawn, wondering what had been his past history, and of what he was thinking so seriously, as he sat with his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes looking far away.

Before she had arrived at any probable conclusion, their tête-à-tête was interrupted by Mr. Martin, who had come quietly behind them, and now stooped to whisper in his leader's ear.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY.

ALICE was startled by the quick change in her protector's face and manner. He turned half round, staring at the whisperer, as if unable to believe his ears.

"Not possible!" was his first ejaculation, to which the other only replied by a significant motion towards the skylight. Mr. Bruce rose quickly, made one stride in that direction, and stood looking down into the cabin for a few moments, then turned away with a half smile.

"It may be, Martin, but I am at fault."

"I am not," was the curt answer.

"How did you find it out?"

"Boat lurched—party uncomfortable—let his glasses slip, only a second, but it was enough. I have not had my eye off him since we left Paris."

"Did Joel see him?"

"Yes. He'd have pinned him then and there, only I knew that wouldn't do."

"Of course not. But he must be watched as he lands. What is he after?"

"Do you think you need ask?"

"Followed us all the way, and we not to find it out till this minute! It seems impossible."

"He managed it well, but I've known him do cleverer things than that," said Martin.

Of this dialogue, Alice heard quite enough to give her a tingle of curiosity and excitement. She looked eagerly at Mr. Bruce when he returned to his seat, and asked him what was the matter.

"Did you ever enjoy the society of a mosquito?"

"Not personally, but I have heard my father describe his experiences in Italy."

"Then you can understand what it would be, after tucking yourself up in your net, hoping for a peaceful night, to hear the hum of the biggest brute of the whole lot, just by your right ear. That is my case at this minute."

"An enemy?" asked she, under her breath, for this sounded like serious earnest.

"Something very like it, when the fellow has dogged us all the way from Australia, and we never found him out till this minute."

"Was it that spectacled gentleman in the train?"

He turned on her in evident surprise. "What made you think of him?"

"I hardly know, only your friend watched him so, I fancied there was something wrong."

"You are a keen observer, as an artist ought to be. Martin

did suspect him, which is more than I did. I saw him at the table d'hôte yesterday, and he quite took me in. Luckily, he is a bad sailor, and in an unguarded moment of misery just now, he exposed his face to Martin, whose eye is like a hawk's."

"But why has he followed you?"

"That would be a long story to tell, even if I could rightly tell it. He is a clever rogue, that I will say for him, and must have laid his plans well to manage as he has done. But that is nothing new to Wily Wilkins. He can act a part for months, so as to deceive anybody; and I believe he hates us the more that we have exposed him once or twice. He has good reasons for remembering *me*."

There was a pause after this; Alice sat musing on the strange adventures of the day, and Mr. Bruce seemed lost in thought, apparently not of the most agreeable nature. Venturing to steal a glance at his countenance, the young girl was struck by its altered expression, and the sad sternness that had gathered over brow and lip. What was he thinking of? What had been his past history, and what were his future prospects, now that he was returning to England? She felt a strong desire to know; she longed to ask; it did seem too bad that she should be friends with him one day, and lose sight of him afterwards for the rest of her life—especially when she could not hide from herself how very much she should like to see his face again. True, he had bespoken a picture, and therefore, perhaps, they should meet; but a hundred things might happen to prevent the meeting, and, no doubt, it would be a matter of indifference to him. Beyond a passing emotion of kindness, why should he care what became of a stranger, without any claim on him whatever?

That he felt for her position, at any rate, he soon gave proof, for he roused himself from his reverie to talk about her plans; and she soon became extremely confidential on the subject, telling him a great deal more of her past troubles and difficulties than there was any occasion for. But Alice was never famous for reticence, and it was so pleasant to receive sympathy, and see the genuine compassion and goodwill in those kind eyes, that she talked on, more and more excitedly, till, suddenly aware that they were about to land, and separate, the loneliness of her situation rushed on her memory, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"I believe you are almost sorry to reach England," said he, gently. "*You* have not longed for, and thought of this moment for five years, as I have."

"Oh, no! and I have no one to expect me, as I suppose you have; and I am not likely to meet with such kindness as yours again."

"I hope you will find something much better than anything I could do for you. I only wish I could see you to your journey's end myself, but, as that cannot be, Joel Treherne is going up to town, and he will attend you to Mr. Carroll's."

"I shall see you again, shall I not, to settle about the picture?"

"Indeed I trust so. Joel will wait to see if your friends are at home to receive you, and will bring me word. In a day or two, perhaps ——"

He checked himself, but there was a suppressed excitement in his tone, and his eye glittered restlessly, though she detected a sigh, even while he smiled.

"Oh!" burst from her involuntarily, "I am sure I can never thank you enough. If ever I can do anything for you in return ——"

"You will, I am sure," said he, offering his arm, as the vessel approached the pier; "and who knows how soon it may be? If I bring an enemy with me, it is something to have made a friend. Here is old England at last! It seems impossible that it is only five years since I went away, and that everything has been going on the same, whether one were here or not. A great event to oneself may be a very small one to the world in general!"

Alice had no time to answer, for the bustle of landing soon absorbed her attention. Glad of her strong protector's arm, she left all arrangements to him as before, and, in due time, found herself in the waiting-room at the station. Here Mr. Bruce made her as snug as he could by the fire, and begged she would remain there till he came back. She had longer to wait than she expected, and was almost dozing when he at last returned, with some apologies for being late. There was, indeed, only just time for him to seat her in a first-class carriage, next to some pleasant-looking people: Joel touching his hat to her as he passed to his own place, as if to intimate that he was at her service when required.

As Gabriel handed Alice her ticket, he whispered that Joel would see to her things, and wait for her orders. Supposing, by any chance, her friends should be out of town, and she were at a loss where to go, he would take her to a quiet hotel for the night, and then she would be able to decide on her next step.

"Don't go wandering alone about London," he added, earnestly; "you will find it worse than the bush to get lost in."

And before she could explain that she had meant to look for a cheap lodging over a colour-shop where her father had formerly dealt, he had pressed her hand kindly, and turned away, leaving in it a small russia-leather purse. Her face of amazement and gratitude, mingled with consternation, was visible for a moment at the window; he lifted his hat, and the train passed swiftly on.

A low, deliberate voice spoke at Gabriel's elbow.

"Here's a nice beginning to life in England!"

"Well," said Gabriel, mildly, "I think it is. Poor little girl! it was a good thing we were there."

"Oh! you are thinking of your stray lamb; I was more interested in the disguised wolf that we have let slip through our fingers, to fly at our throats some fine moonlight night."

"We will wear stiff shirt-collars, old boy, and defy his fangs. How came you to miss him?"

"Can't imagine. Could have sworn no one passed us the least like him. I watched one side, and Joel the other, but when we came to ask for him, we were told he had gone ashore. Must have had friends on board, or bought over some of the crew. Anyhow, he's gone!"

"Let him go, Martin. He may make the first trick, if he pleases; we will take care he does not get the odd one."

"The sooner we go to work, then, the better. Please to step on a few paces. I have studied the proper distance, and mean to keep it."

"Don't be a fool, Martin."

"No," said Martin, drily, "I won't. So as you have an appointment to keep, and I haven't, I shall keep to my place in the rear at present."

"Your place is by my side, dear old fellow."

"In a scrimmage, perhaps—but we have not come to that yet. No, sir," as Bruce laid his hand coaxingly on his arm. "You gave me your promise, and I crossed the sea on the faith of it."

"Cross-grained beggar! have your own way, if that is your notion of service," grumbled his master, and moved on through the streets of the town. Martin, following at the distance he chose to consider correct, presently saw him take off his hat and disappear through a doorway.

A strange smile flitted over his own sunburnt features, for he knew by that gesture what Gabriel had found; and which, wherever he went among the haunts of men, seemed the first thing he looked for. In any one else he might have regarded it as a womanly weakness; but Gabriel Bruce, though often a puzzle, could do no wrong in Martin's sight.

"Who would suppose, to see him in those places, that he had the stuff in him we've seen him show?" was his mental comment, not for the first time. "Can't conceive what he finds there, but it's meat and drink to him, I know, so he shall have his fill. Only, in case Wily Wilkins should be taken with a sudden fit of devotion too, I'll make bold to call out the guard."

About ten minutes later, one of the clergy, in charge of the mission church—for such it was—passing to the neighbouring school-house, was attracted by the sight of a somewhat singular figure, leaning in the doorway, as if on the watch; for he was glancing one moment into the interior, and the next up and down the street. Being evidently a stranger, and possibly in some difficulty or distress, it would only be courteous, thought Mr. Forrest, to inquire if one could be of any service. The inquiry at once brought the stranger out upon the pavement, and after one rapid glance over the clergyman, Martin took off his hat with great civility, hoped he was not intruding, but he was waiting for his master.

"Is your master in the chapel?" asked Mr. Forrest, still more perplexed than before, by the language and manner of the speaker.

"He is, sir. He is come from Australia to keep an appointment—and it seems to begin here."

"You do not seem to be keeping it with him. Will you not like to go in? It is open to everybody."

"Thank you, sir. It looks too good a place for poor ignorant folks. We leave those things for our betters."

"This is only acting," thought the experienced priest; "if he be ignorant, as very likely he is, he does not think himself so. Well, my friend," he said, aloud, in a kindly tone, "I don't know who your betters may be, but remember, this is your Father's house, so you have a right to claim a welcome."

"Have I?" The dark face grew many shades darker, and the white teeth gleamed through the fringe on the lips. "I wonder where it would come from if I did claim it! I beg your pardon, sir"—the voice was again demurely civil—"here is my master coming out. I must attend upon him."

But the clergyman pushed him hastily aside, in his eagerness to greet the new-comer, emerging from the doorway. "Gabriel Bruce! it is you—come back after all!" was his almost breathless exclamation, as both hands went out to seize that of the traveller.

"Why, Forrest, old fellow, this is good luck, indeed! How are you? Not grown stouter since I left you. They have taken something out of you here, in return for all you have driven into them."

"It is not a life to grow fat upon," said the curate, "but I may return the compliment. You look weather-beaten—I hope that is the only sense in which you are beaten at all."

"I am up to the mark, and true to time. Didn't I tell you when I wished you good-bye, that you would see me back in five years, or never? The five years have still two days to run—and here I am."

"When did you arrive? Of course you are coming to me."

"I'll come to you for a couple of hours with pleasure, but we go up to town by the next train. Martin, come here. This is an old and valued friend of mine, Mr. Forrest. Philip, that you see me here, to-day, not much the worse for weather-beating, is owing, in great measure, to my finding at the antipodes two as loyal friends as even you could be. Here is one of them, my confidential servant, Martin—the other is gone off to London on business. That's right," as Philip Forrest shook hands with the confidential servant, whether the latter liked it or not; "he is the proudest, crankiest, most ill-conditioned ruffian you ever had to deal with, and unless I am excessively severe, he will be master yet."

"A ticket-of-leave convict, probably," thought the mission priest, but without in the least regretting the shaken hand, for was not this the very class he was always trying to win? Postponing his visit to the school, he slipped his arm into that of his recovered friend,

and joyfully piloted him to his lodgings. Martin followed just out of ear-shot, and kept a keen watch on every turning they passed.

"You have got on well, Philip, since I was here. I left you in rough water, I remember."

"Yes, we had some knocking about at first, but we pulled through. You may weather most things in England, if you have only pluck and patience."

"And a little faith too, we'll say."

"No, not a little; I am supposing that you have a great deal—enough to make you sure, in the thick of your troubles, that the fault may be in you, but not in your cause. That has been David's comfort over and over again."

"Where is David now?"

"In London—doing the same work there, only his is twice as hard, and he has twice the power of doing it. He lives in the very heart of his work ——"

"And of his people, no doubt."

"Yes, he has got in there, somehow. And the presence of a man like that among them is a help to all that is good in their natures—and there is a deal more good than the world in general supposes. You have found that out, I'll be bound, where you have been. That specimen behind us ——"

"Distinguish, as the French say. The specimen behind us is of a very different order. He is a gentleman's son, though he refuses to be called a gentleman, and would only accompany me as my servant. A first-rate servant he is, too. There is nothing to which he cannot turn his hand, and nothing he will not do for any one he loves. I tell you this in confidence, for he is a strange fellow; and the only way to deal with him is to let him have his own way."

"And his way is to be your servant? Has he no other means of living?"

"For that matter, he would contrive to live anywhere; but I hope to make him a rich man before I have done. I find him board and lodging for his services, that we may keep together, but he really is one of my partners."

"Has he had any education?"

"As to books, none, since he was ten years old. He taught himself most of what he knows, and has lived a bush life long enough to be accomplished in all the resources for making a man independent of civilization. To ride, shoot, track a foot-print like an Indian; find his way by marvellous instinct where you or I would wander hopelessly till we dropped; understand the habits of bird and beast, and the handwriting of nature on bark and leaf: these are what he has learned, and practised on my behalf. And I can tell you, Philip, he has a heart worth anyone's reaching, only it has a hedge round it. I shall look to see you, or your brother, scrambling through, if you don't mind a few scratches and tears."

"How did you manage it?"

"Oh, I was lucky. We fell in with each other accidentally. He was taken ill at a station where I was (that place where I wrote to you that I had opened a store—it was not so bad as a speculation), and I had him under my care, and helped him to pull through. There had been some foul play at work, for he had hardly ever had a day's illness before, and believed it was all owing to some drink he had tasted at his last halt. He got over it at last, and took to me from that time. It was a chance that might not have occurred to one man in fifty."

"And that could not have occurred to one better able to use it. I see—it was a fortunate illness for both, whatever brought it on. And the other follower you mentioned—is he a partner, or servant, too?"

"Both, and a six-foot Cornishman into the bargain. Began life as a drummer—served first in the Land Transport Corps—then was in the —th, and was discharged for ill-health on his return from India —supposed to be in a galloping consumption—went to Australia on the chance of its doing him good, and took out a new lease of existence. A staunch, faithful fellow, the finest hand with a spade you ever saw; it was only a pity to waste such skill in gold-digging. He has a regular genius for gardening—is a botanist, too, in an unlearned way, and so brave and patient. Ah, I have seen him tried, poor fellow. He was charged at by a brute of a bull once; and if I had not been at hand, and a pretty steady shot, it would have been all over with poor Joel. His horse was killed, and he was laid up some weeks, but you never heard him complain."

"That was another lucky accident, then."

"Well, it was lucky for me, for he would have it he owed me his life, and never thinks he can do enough for me in return. And those two, Forrest, helped to bring me through such a tussle as I hope never to be in again. I was as nearly desperate as man could be, who did not quite lose his hold on everything. Chance after chance had failed, time was getting short, funds were melting, and my work was hardly begun. That I struggled on as I did, and got what I wanted, under God's mercy, is owing to them."

"You did get it, then? So many fail, that I hardly hoped it for you. You have really made your fortune?"

"Really—or what seems like a fortune to me, with every prospect of steady increase. At any rate, I have enough to buy a home, and live in it. That reminds me—Martin!"

"Sir?" said Martin, stepping forward respectfully.

"Have you that advertisement handy?"

Martin produced an old leathern case, whence he extracted a fragment of newspaper, with the names of sundry houses to be let or sold. To one of these Gabriel drew his friend's attention.

"You used to know that part of the world, Forrest; do you know that house?"

"Low-levels—North Devon? To be sure I do. It belongs

to a medical friend of mine, and he is always trying to get rid of it."

"Why?"

"Well, the fact is, it has got a bad name."

"Aye? How so?" asked Mr. Bruce, while the confidential servant grew keenly attentive.

"I don't know the whole of the story, but it was a very sad one. He got it a bargain—furnished it beautifully for his young wife, and was very happy with her at first. Then—it sounds ridiculous, but it is too true a tale—she met with some terrible fright, and her nerves were so shaken, she used to declare she saw strange faces and heard strange footsteps at night. Indeed, it was during a paroxysm of fear, in consequence of one of these spectral illusions, that the poor lady died. My friend cannot bear the sight of the house, and has let it several times. But stories of that kind never lose by telling, and such frights are contagious, I suppose, for one and another gave up the house, choosing rather to lose money by their bargain than remain in such quarters. It was only the other day I heard from him that a negotiation, which seemed all he could wish, had failed."

Gabriel and Martin looked at each other.

"If you please, sir," said the latter, "where can I find out about the trains? I could start to-night, and telegraph to you when I had seen it."

"No need of such hurry as that, Martin. I must keep my appointment first, remember. But Mr. Forrest will help us to all the information we want. You will give me a letter of introduction to your friend, Philip? A ghost or two, more or less, will be a refreshing change after the gold-diggings."

"Are you sure you have brought none back with you?" asked the curate, with a significant smile.

"Not at all sure, but they will not be afraid of yours. In plain earnest, what you tell me only makes me more anxious to secure the house as soon as may be, so any details will be acceptable. Martin, this concerns you as well as me, so you must just keep alongside, with your ears open—as well as your eyes."

Martin bowed, and obeyed so far as walking abreast with the other two was concerned, and listening to all Mr. Forrest said. But when they reached his lodgings, and he pressed them to go in for refreshments, nothing would induce the confidential servant to comply. He left them to enjoy their conversation together, and roamed about the town and along the pier, indifferent to darkness and cold, until he met his master at the station in time for the evening train.

When his friend had left him, Mr. Forrest wrote in haste to his brother in London.

"Dear Davie,—By to-night's train goes up to town our friend Gabriel Bruce. You remember how mad we thought his scheme of giving up the army, and rushing off to Australia to turn his few thousands into a

fortune in five years. I wish we showed half the pluck and energy in our work that he has shown in his. He has made 'the crown a pound,' and both are meant for one whom you know well. Considering how useful you find her, this may not be welcome news for you, Master Davie.

"Bruce has a strange story to tell you, and the end of it is yet to come. To make it stranger still, nothing will satisfy him but he must take Low-levels, ghosts and all. It will be a great relief to poor Frank Nelson, at any rate; and should those wicked attempts be ever renewed, I imagine the parties concerned will meet with a warmer reception than they may be prepared for.

"Show Gabriel your work, and explain what you want. His hand and heart are both open. And take note of the singular fellow he has brought over with him as henchman. There is more there than appears at first sight. His face perplexes and moves me."

CHAPTER III.

HOW ALICE WAS RECEIVED.

In the most comfortable corner of a cunningly devised sofa, with a low tea-table within easy reach of her hand, reclined a fair and elegantly-dressed young lady, recovering from the effects of a round of visits on a February afternoon, with the help of a new magazine of thrilling interest.

The room in which this healing process was being carried on looked as if designed for no other purpose; so suggestive were the chairs; so tempting was the supply of serial literature; so bright the fire in the grate; so pleasant the light of the silvery reading-lamp, still necessary at that hour in London; so eloquent the handsome fender-stool in its invitation to chilly feet. Perhaps a few of the numberless articles, crowded on table and chiffonnier, might have been dispensed with, if only to allow a little more room for work-box, or portfolio. But then work-boxes and portfolios mean occupation, and this was the Elysium of repose; no harder task being required than the physical effort of cutting open the new number, and the mental one of recollecting the old. For those whose nerves required a deeper remedy, there was generally provided a Review of some kind or other, just interesting enough to arrest the attention, and just grave enough to lull it into forgetfulness; when the head would sink back into the downy pillow, with a sense of being the right thing in the right place: not always vouchsafed to heads in the midst of mighty old London.

The moment of subsiding had not come to the mistress of this soft, but not chilly nest, or else the plot of the March number was too deftly woven; for she turned her head quickly as the door stealthily opened, and at once invited fearless approach.

"I am not asleep; come in, and shut the door. I have just finished this, and then you shall have it. Your whiskers would stand on end if I told you what was coming."

"Don't tell me! I won't be told!" cried the new-comer, dropping into the most capacious of the easy-chairs, and turning his feet to the blaze. "Have you got a cup of tea for me, Tiny? This north-east wind is enough to make a hound hoarse; the dust nearly chokes one. What an awful humbug that street watering is, considering how much we pay. I say, Tiny, shall you be long?"

"It depends on how often you interrupt me; so drink your tea and meditate, and then you will at least not be wasting time."

And Mrs. Hartley Carroll turned another page, and smiled to herself at the dialogue she was enjoying, regardless of aggravating her lord's curiosity: perhaps enjoying herself all the more for it, as she saw how enviously he was watching her over his Dresden tea-cup.

"Tiny—Clare—I say! Do put that rubbish down for one moment! I have something to tell you."

"Yes, dear."

But the rubbish was not put down, and the attention was only half given.

"I have seen just the horse for you this summer."

"I knew you would see it, dear. I said so."

"But it is a very long figure, I can tell you."

"Then as mine is rather a short one, we shall strike the average, for of course you have bought it. I despair of curing your reckless habits of expenditure, poor dear Hartley. Anything else?"

"Yes. Strahan came and sat in my room for nearly an hour at luncheon-time, and I never saw him so amiable. It almost took away my appetite, for I am sure it means mischief. He is coming in to dinner to-night."

"Mischievous people always suspect others," said Tiny, as she closed her magazine, and threw it dexterously into his willing hands. "As Sir Jesse is coming in to-night I should like to give him a little advice."

"It is one of the few good things he will not take. What should you advise, Clare?"

"That he did not come so often. No, Hartley," as he looked up inquiringly; "I have thought it well over in every way, and I am quite certain it will never be. Of course, he has a right to try, but it will be labour thrown away, and so you may tell him."

"Thank you, I shall do nothing of the kind. Your sister might, very justly, consider me officious, and some day turn round upon me for having stood in the way of her happiness."

"Happiness?" repeated Clare, disdainfully.

"Well, my dear, it is not to be expected that two sisters should both be equally fortunate. To you, of course, it would be worse than nothing to be called Lady Strahan, and have the key to his

well-filled coffers. But why should it be so with Edith, who would be able to turn him round her finger, when once she had his ring on it, and would have him to back her in all her schemes and plans of goodness, to her very heart's content?"

"Oh, Hartley, Hartley! how can you be so slow in understanding the people you see every day? How can you help seeing the difference between those two, and the impossibility of their ever being happy together—the one always pretending to be what the other is? His goodness consists in having his name at the head of subscriptions for great philanthropic schemes, and all he cares for is that it should be said and known how much Sir Jesse Strahan gives, and how beautifully he can speak. While Edith—what does anybody know of the good she does—spending half her time and money in those wretched streets in David Forrest's parish, and coming home day after day, looking so harassed and tired out that I am ready to wish them all at the bottom of the sea."

"Don't wish that, my dear; depend upon it, Forrest would go after them in a diving-bell, and take her with him. You don't suppose," said Hartley, stooping to replenish the fire, "that I think Strahan good enough for your sister? It would be hard to say who *is*. But I know you think as I do, that her spirits want a little change of ideas and amusement—they have never been the same since your father's death. She wants a councillor. Her time and her money are being spent with nothing to show for it, that I can see. Now, a fellow like Strahan, whose innocence will never stand in his way, would make her charity go twice as far, for he would never be taken in."

"Do you think Edith would consider that a recommendation? She would much rather believe the best, than be made to see the worst. It is my private opinion that some of her poor folks know more about Sir Jesse than is favourable to his cause, and he did himself no good by attempting, as he called it, to open her eyes."

"Ah, indeed!" said Hartley.

This was a new idea, but he refrained from comment. He had his own reasons for giving Sir Jesse Strahan a certain amount of support, though in his heart he agreed with his wife.

"Woman's eyes," he murmured, as he leaned back in his chair to enjoy his magazine, "were never meant to see with—only to be seen. Directly you want to look, you begin to make a mess of it, like this dear lady in your story, who really has contrived to get into a nice hole. Have you the least notion how she is to scramble out of it? I can't conceive how such things get into people's heads."

He read half a page in peace before his wife disturbed him.

"Hartley!"

"All right." He was caught in his turn, and did not look up.

"You can have no possible reason for *wishing* such a thing?"

"I don't wish it at all. Do let me finish this!"

"Then what do you mean by all you have been saying?"

"Only that I can't quarrel with the man, and say I won't ask him to the house, when I know he wants to come. I promised him fair play—that's all. There's no harm done. If any one knows how to behave in such a case, it is Edith. She can take care of herself, without our help."

"What is going to happen to her, may I ask?"

The voice came from behind his chair, and though resembling Tiny's, was the rich contralto to her sweet treble. Hartley, who had started at the sound of it, looked round with a comic gesture of consternation, as a young lady of great beauty, about a year older than Mrs. Carroll, moved to the table, and helped herself to tea.

"Upon my word," he said, "I do believe there is something uncanny about you. I don't like women who make no sound when they walk. They give me an unpleasant recollection of Wehr-wolf stories, that used to set my teeth chattering with fear—the fascinating lady of the castle disappearing at strange hours, and being hunted by her lover as a wild beast, till he finds her out by cutting off her right paw. Yes, I see yours are all right so far," as Edith held out her hand with a smile; "but take care. We none of us play our parts so well but we get found out in time. Destiny is too strong for us, and yours may be nearer than you think."

"How long have you been so wise, Hartley? Or have you been playing a double part, too?"

"Now, that is the severest *coup-de-patte* I have met with for a long time. Do you really wish to know your destiny, audacious woman? Would you thank me for letting you see it?"

She looked at him for a moment, as if about to answer in jest; then a shade of sadness passed over her dark eyes, and she turned silently to the fire.

Tiny saw the change, and was puzzled.

"Edith," said Hartley, "Strahan is coming to dinner, with his pocket full of votes and proxies and what not, for you, or rather, your candidate. I don't know what they are all about."

"For the Idiot Asylum, I hope."

"Possibly. He is determined you shall win, and has taken an immense deal of trouble. He will tell you all about it this evening."

"I am much obliged to him; if we are successful, it will be a great weight off my mind." said Edith, simply. Sir Jesse Strahan's coming was a matter of indifference, but his votes were not.

Tiny had risen from the sofa, and stood now with her hand slipped into her sister's arm.

"I don't want to appear hard-hearted," she said, coaxingly, "but why must you, because you go among such cases, take them so dreadfully to heart? It is quite right to be kind to poor people, of course, and to visit them, if you like it; but why let their affairs

weigh on your mind, as if they were your own? That is what I cannot understand."

"No, darling," said Edith, caressing the pretty head that nestled on her shoulder, "it is not likely that you should. It is by seeing troubles that one learns to feel them as realities. It you knew how it strikes me when I come straight from one of those places into this pleasant room of yours, where everything is so perfect, and know that you have not a wish ungratified ——"

"I have! you are quite wrong there! I have a very, very strong wish, and the pleasure of my whole life depends upon it. I want to see you happy and bright as you used to be—and so does Hartley. We cannot bear to see you go on like this, day after day, as if something were hanging over your head, which you expected every minute might come down. I cannot stand seeing you wear yourself out, and no one ever being the better for it. *Is* any one the better? Does it make you one bit happier? If you cannot be good and happy at the same time, you really must fix some hour in the week—say Saturday afternoon, as it is a holiday—in which you are not to be quite so good so usual—just for the sake of your spirits, not to mention mine."

Edith, touched and amused, and, perhaps, a little conscience-stricken, found it difficult to reply in words, without saying too much; but the pressure of her fingers, as she stroked her sister's fair hair, showed Clare her sermon had told. Before the silence was again broken, there was a ring at the door-bell, and Miss Leicester began quickly preparing to leave the room.

"Why disturb yourself? I have been invisible ever since I came in," said Tiny. "You don't expect anybody, do you?"

"It is just possible that Mr. Forrest may call."

The door was opened at this moment by a servant, who delivered a message in a low voice, received her answer and retired.

"Who is it?" asked Hartley, as his sister-in-law prepared to follow. "If it is Forrest, get him to stay and dine."

"Edith," said Mrs. Carroll, as her sister was leaving the room, "if it turns out to be that mad Miss Garlock, the clairvoyante, I should like to have a peep at my future career."

"That I forbid," said Hartley, solemnly. "Edith may have a look at her own if she likes, but yours belongs to me. Go and meet your fate, Edith—I told you that destiny would be too strong for you yet. It may be waiting for you at this moment."

Many a true word is spoken in jest. But never was destiny clothed in a more unlikely form than that which met Edith Leicester's sight on repairing to her private sitting-room, in the shabby youthful figure and nervously-working features of Alice Kerr, who, having had leisure to grow timid, stood stammering and blushing, unable to utter a word of intelligible explanation. The numerous warnings Miss Leicester had received against plausible petitioners returned to her memory, but before she had time to act upon them a second rush of recollection

overpowered the first, and her outstretched hands and warm smile of welcome at once relieved the beating heart of the trembling visitor.

"Alice Kerr! My dear child, I did not know you at first. How long it is since I saw you—and you have grown into a woman meanwhile. Come and sit down by the fire; your hands are very cold. You shall have some tea directly. When did you arrive in England?"

"To-day," said Alice. Her courage had so nearly evaporated, that she could only falter out a brief answer. It would be so terribly silly to burst out crying, and the least thing would make her do it.

"And how did you come—not alone?"

"No—I mean yes—at first I had no choice. I was obliged to leave in a hurry, and I didn't know what to do."

"So you came to me. Good child."

Miss Leicester rang the bell, which was quickly answered by an elderly maid-servant, to whom she gave the order for tea, and then drew her own chair by that of her guest.

"I am almost afraid of asking, Alice—your father?"

"Died last summer," said Alice, abruptly.

"Why did you not let me know?"

"I never thought of it. Ought I? You see, I hoped to manage and be independent. I tried very hard—indeed I did."

"In what way, dear?"

"I tried staying on at the pension, giving lessons for my board. But there was a set made against me, and I could not stand up against it. I thought in London I might have a chance as—as an artist, you know," stammered Alice, keenly aware of the blank surprise on her listener's beautiful face. "Papa used to say—used to hope—I should turn out something. And you told me once, that if ever I really wanted a friend ——"

"You were to come to me. So I did. And you really want one now, so you have come, is that it?"

"If you wouldn't mind—as you knew papa, and how clever he was. I thought you would, perhaps, put me in the way of getting pupils; and if you could tell me where I could find a cheap, respectable room to live in, I should be able to get on by degrees. I don't care the least about situation, or furniture, if I have but a bed and chair and table, and a tolerable light for drawing. I am not at all particular."

"I am glad to hear that," said Edith, who was now pouring out the tea which the elderly servant had brought in, to whom, as soon as the guest was supplied, she gave a few whispered instructions. That these were well understood was evident by the keen, though not unkind glance the experienced attendant gave to Alice, as she curtsied and withdrew.

"I am glad you are not particular, Alice," continued Edith, when they were again alone, "for I am not at all sure about the light, and

the accommodation will be limited. But—I must ask you first, are you prepared to be guided by my advice?"

"So long as you don't advise me to go back again. For in the first place I won't—and in the second I can't."

"Why cannot you?"

"I have no money—none of my own, at least."

"Poor child! How did you mean, then, to live in London?"

"I had money enough to keep me a little while, on bread, at any rate; but my pocket was picked at the Paris station. If it had not been for a gentleman's goodness, I should not be here now."

"A gentleman, my dear? Do you mean a stranger?"

"Yes, an English gentleman, coming home overland from Australia. You can't think how kind he was. Fancy my feelings when he had taken my ticket, and I found I had no money to pay him? He might have thought me an impostor, you know; but instead of that, he was as kind as if he had known me all my life, and I never had so pleasant a journey. I was obliged to be one of his party, as he paid for me all the way, and they took such care of me! His servant came with me to London, and is waiting for me downstairs."

"What is he waiting for, dear?" asked Edith, to whose experience all this sounded rather doubtful.

"Only to know my address. Of course I am to pay back what he advanced. He put this purse in my hand when he wished me good-bye. And he is to have the refusal of one of papa's sketches, which I have in my box. It was so considerate to arrange in that way, that I might not feel I was under an obligation; though of course I was, and always shall be."

"Of course," said Miss Leicester, thoughtfully. "Did he give you his card?"

"He apologised for not doing so, but he had not got one. He was just come from the gold-diggings, I believe, with his two companions, who treat him as their master, but seem more like friends than servants. I am sure he is the kind of man to win people's hearts."

"So I perceive, dear. Did you discover his name?"

"Oh, yes. I saw it written in a book he was reading. And he knew your name too, and Mrs. Carroll's, though he did not know which of you was married. He said he had been away five years. His name is Bruce—Gabriel Bruce. I noticed it particularly, as I never met with anyone of the name before."

"Are you sure, Alice?" It was Edith's turn to falter now, and it was with difficulty she could ask the question.

"Quite sure. Do you know him?"

"Yes—we—we used to know a gentleman of that name," said Miss Leicester, busying herself with the tea-cups, though scarcely conscious of what she was doing, "about five years ago, as you say." She turned away from Alice's curious eyes, and relieved herself by vigorously attacking the fire. "He used to visit my father, and was

an old schoolfellow of Mr. Carroll's; so he will be glad"—she drew a long breath—"very glad to know he is alive and well. Oh, yes, I am sure Hartley will be glad—and he is in England, then?"

The last words were spoken almost in a whisper. The "Thank God!" that followed was not spoken at all. Alice could not make out whether she were glad or sorry, and felt almost provoked.

"In England? Yes; and he will be in London very soon. Wherever I am, he will try and see me, if I only send him word by Joel Treherne."

"We will soon arrange that," said Miss Leicester, ringing the bell; and on the nurse's entrance, she requested that the servant who accompanied Miss Kerr might be shown upstairs to receive her message.

"What am I to say?" asked Alice.

"Say, with your compliments and thanks to Mr. Bruce, that you will remain here for the present. That is all."

"Remain here?"

"Yes; you said you were not particular. I have only a dressing-room to give you, next my own; but since you come to me for advice, I advise you to try that till better offers."

"But, indeed, dear Miss Leicester, I did not mean to encroach like this."

"Well, if you let a strange gentleman pay for your journey, you need not object to an old schoolfellow offering you a bed. You see, my dear child, independence is not to be had in a moment; and till we have had time to look about us, and decide on what is best to be done, you will be safer here than running about London alone. You are not afraid of me, are you?"

"Oh, you are too kind, too good!" sobbed Alice, jumping up and throwing her arms round her neck. "It is too much happiness to be allowed to stay here—only ——"

"Only you meant to have your own way, and you find you must have mine. Don't be afraid; you shall fly when your wings are strong enough, my dear little messenger bird."

Edith caressed her as she clung, and Alice felt her whole frame quiver, and, looking up, saw a deep glow in the pensive dark eyes, and a flush on the cheek that had been so pale, adding tenfold to the beauty which surpassed all she had ever beheld. That one so lovely should be also so kind—as kind even as Mr. Bruce—was irresistible, and Alice's allegiance was given on the spot.

"Your way shall be mine from this moment! I wonder who could resist you!" she exclaimed, so enthusiastically as to make Miss Leicester smile, even while listening, almost anxiously, to the footsteps approaching the door.

"Time will show, Alice; only mind you keep your word. Come in!" as a respectful tap was heard, and the Cornishman, hat in hand, was ushered in by Nurse Ellis. "Is this your attentive escort, Alice? I am sure we are all exceedingly obliged, both to him and to Mr. Bruce."

The smile she bestowed on Joel Treherne had a marked effect on that stalwart personage. As he expressed himself afterwards, it was just like turning out of the tangle of the bush, and meeting the blessed sun glowing into your very eyes. His bronzed face took even a deeper hue than the sun had already given; and his gaze of admiration was too honest to be misunderstood by one of her experience.

She made a sign to Ellis, who forthwith produced wine and glasses, and Miss Leicester filled one for Joel with her own hands. "You have been long in your present service?" she asked, as Joel, with becoming reverence, accepted the proffered civility; as he would have done had those fair fingers proffered him liquid fire.

"Well, ma'am," was the unexpected answer, "that is hard to say, for Mr. Bruce, he was part of the time in mine."

"In yours?"

"Yes, ma'am. You see he saved my life first, and nursed me afterwards; and when you've no other friend within some thousand miles or so, that counts as good long service, ma'am—that do."

"It is good service anywhere. You met with your master in Australia, then?"

"Yes, ma'am; we fell in with each other when he was looking out for hands and I for a job. He was for trying his luck at farming then, you see, ma'am; but it didn't pay, and we went to the gold-fields after that."

"And did the gold-fields pay?"

"Not at first, ma'am; everything went clean against us till the last year, and that made up for all—just in time."

"Was time such an object with you?"

"With my master, it wur, ma'am, for he had an appointment to keep."

Joel's face grew several shades redder as he said this, and he looked straight into his glass, glad to empty it by way of hiding his confusion.

"An appointment?" repeated Miss Leicester. "Come, take another glass of wine—you must, indeed."

And she refilled Joel's glass with faint resistance on his part. He was raising it to his lips, when she inquired, with an assumed air of carelessness, if Mr. Bruce's health had suffered from his exertions.

"He has got the lives of ten men in him, *I* think, ma'am," was Joel's answer. "Anyhow, he risked his own ten times over for the sake of the gold. We all did our best, but his was worth a dozen of ours."

"Risked his life for gold?" she repeated, sadly. "Then I hope he succeeded at last?"

"Just in time for his appointment, ma'am, as I was saying. And if he hadn't, he'd just have broke his heart. He kept us all up when we were down-hearted, as you *du* get sometimes, ma'am, after you've worked and worked, and hoped and hoped, and nothing comes of all your work and all your hoping. But if he had once given in hisself—it wouldn't have been none of us that could have pulled him up again!"

"I am certain you were true and faithful to him," said Miss Leicester, with glistening eyes.

"Well, ma'am, I tried to do my duty. If you are not true and faithful to the like of him, I don't know what you'd have, and you don't know yourself," said Joel, somewhat obscurely, for the more Miss Leicester looked at him, the more excited he grew.

"Well," said Edith, with a sigh, "at any rate, all Mr. Bruce's friends will be glad to hear that he succeeded at last, with the help of his good comrades. Be kind enough to give Miss Kerr's compliments, with Miss Leicester's, to your master, with many thanks for his kindness; and tell him Miss Kerr will remain here for the present. We shall hope to thank him ourselves when he gives us the opportunity."

Joel bowed respectfully, and moved to the door. Edith followed and slipped gold into his hand. He was about to decline, with some vehemence, but met her eye again, and could only obey its imperative command.

"Well!" he said, drawing a long breath, as he found himself on the landing, with only the elderly maid-servant. "Well! that beats all I've come across yet, and I've seen a few, I have."

"What beats what?" asked the nurse, with some curiosity.

"I'd make appointments myself, and go through as much to keep 'em, for a pair of such eyes—that I would. Suppose I just run down and histe up the young lady's box? It would save some trouble, wouldn't it?"

"A deal," said the nurse, "for those men make a difficulty of everything. It's quite a favour to get 'em to bring up a scuttle of coals, and I'd rather do it myself, twenty times over."

"You'd never need do that, if I were at hand," said Joel, gallantly; and before she had time to look round he had returned, with Alice Kerr's small amount of worldly goods on shoulder and arm.

"Thank you kindly," said the nurse. "I wish I was as strong as you, or as young, for that matter."

"That's nothing," protested Joel. "They tell a story in my home of a Cornish chap as brought a donkey-load of faggots, donkey and all, on his back, and tumbled the whole lot upon the hearth, to make up his mistress's fire."

"I don't believe a word of it."

"You don't? Then perhaps you won't believe this either—that if your mistress wanted her fire made up, and faggots ran short, there'd be some donkeys in the world as would tumble in of their own accord. But you'll find it true for all that."

He had been untying the knotted cord round Alice's crazy trunk, while speaking; and having accomplished this somewhat difficult feat, took his departure. Leaving the nurse to ponder on the meaning of his last words.

(To be continued.)

THE MYSTERY AT NUMBER SEVEN.

"LET us go and give her a turn," cried the Squire.

Tod laughed. "What, all of us?" said he.

"To be sure. All of us. Why not? We'll start to-morrow."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Todhetley, dismay in her mild tone. "Children and all?"

"Children and all: and take Hannah to see to them," said the Squire. "You don't count, Joe: you will be off elsewhere."

"We could never be ready," said the Mater, looking the image of perplexity. "To-morrow's Friday. Besides, there would be no time to write to Mary."

"*Write to her!*" cried the Squire, turning sharply on his heel as he paced the room in his nankeen morning coat. "And who do you suppose is going to write to her? Why, it would cause her to make all sorts of preparation; put her to no end of trouble. A pretty conjurer you'd make! We will take her by surprise: that's what we will do."

"But, if, when we got there, we should find her rooms are let, sir?" said I, the doubt striking me.

"Then we'll go into others, Johnny. A spell at the seaside will be a change for us."

This conversation, and the Squire's planning-out, arose through a letter we had just received from Mary Blair—poor Blair's widow, if you have not forgotten him, who went to his end through that gazette of Jerry's. After a few ups and downs, trying at this thing for a living, trying at that, Mrs. Blair had now settled in a house at the seaside and opened a day-school. She hoped to get on in it in time, she wrote, especially if she could be so fortunate as to let her drawing-room to visitors. The Squire, always impulsive and good-hearted, at once cried out that *we* would go and take it.

"It will be doing her a good turn, you see," he ran on, "and when we leave I daresay she'll find other people to go in. Let's see" —picking up the letter to refer to the address: "No. 6, Seabord Terrace, Montpellier-by-Sea. Whereabouts is Montpellier-by-Sea?"

"Never heard of it in my life," cried Tod. "Don't believe there is such a place."

"Be quiet, Joe. I fancy it lies somewhere towards Saltwater."

Tod flung back his head. "Saltwater! A nice common place that is!"

"Hold your tongue, sir. Johnny, fetch me the railway guide."

Upon looking at the guide, it was found there, "Montpellier-by-Sea," the last station before getting to Saltwater. As to Saltwater, it might be common, as Tod said; for it was crowded by all sorts of people, but it was lively and healthy.

Not on the next day, Friday, for it was impossible to get ready in such a heap of a hurry, but on the following Tuesday we started. Tod had left on the Saturday for Gloucestershire. His own mother's relatives lived there, and they were always inviting him.

"Montpellier-by-Sea?" cried the railway clerk in a doubting tone as we were getting the tickets. "Let's see? Where is that?"

Of course that set the Squire exploding: what right had clerks to pretend to issue tickets unless they knew their business? The clerk in question coolly ran his finger down the railway list he had turned to, and then gave us the tickets.

"It is a station not much frequented, you see," he civilly observed, "Travellers mostly go on to Saltwater."

But for the train being due, and our having to make a rush for the platform, the Squire would have waited to give the young man a piece of his mind. "Saltwater, indeed!" said he, "I wonder the fellow does not issue his edict as to where people shall go and where they sha'n't."

We arrived in due time at our destination. It was written up as large as life on a white board, "Montpellier-by-Sea." A small road-side station, open to the country around; no signs of sea or of houses to be seen; a broad rural district, apparently given over entirely to agriculture. On went the whistling train, leaving the group of us standing by our luggage on the platform. The Squire was staring about him doubtfully.

"Can you tell me where Seabord Terrace is?"

"Seabord Terrace?" repeated the station-master. "No, sir, I don't know it. There's no terrace of that name hereabouts. For that matter there are no terraces at all; no houses, in fact."

The Squire's face was a picture. He saw that (save a solitary farm homestead or two) the country was bare of dwelling places.

"This is Montpellier-by-Sea?" he questioned at last.

"Sure enough it is, sir. Munpler, it's called down here."

"Then Seabord Terrace must be *somewhere* in it—somewhere about. What a strange thing!"

"Perhaps the gentlefolks want to go to Saltwater?" spoke up one of the two porters employed at the little station. "There's lots of terraces there. Here, Jim!"—calling to his fellow—"come here a minute. He'll know, sir; he comes from Saltwater."

Jim approached, and settled the doubt at once. He knew Seabord Terrace very well indeed: it was at Saltwater; just out at the eastern end of it.

Yes, it was at Saltwater. And there were we, more than two miles off it, on a broiling hot day when walking was impracticable, with all our trunks about us, and no fly to be had, or other means of getting on. The Squire went into one of his passions, and demanded why people living at Saltwater should give their address as Montpellier-by-Sea.

He had hardly patience to listen to the station-master's explanation —who acknowledged that we were not the first travelling party that had been deluded in like manner. Munpler (as he and the rest of the natives persisted in calling it) was an extensive, straggling, rural parish, filled with farm lands; an arm of it extended as far as Saltwater, and the new buildings at that end of Saltwater had rechristened themselves Montpellier-by-Sea, deeming it more aristocratic than the common old name. Had the Squire been able to transport the new buildings, builders and all, he had surely done it on the spot.

Well, we got on to Saltwater in the evening by another train, and to No. 6, Seaboard Terrace. Mary Blair was just delighted.

"If I had but known you were coming, if you had but written to me, I would have explained that it was Saltwater Station you must get out at, not Montpellier," she cried in deprecation.

"But, my dear, why on earth do you give in to a deceit?" stormed the Squire. "Why call your place Montpellier when it's Saltwater?"

"I do what other people do," she sighed; "I was told it was Montpellier when I came here. Generally speaking, I have explained when writing to friends, that it is really Saltwater, in spite of its fine name: I suppose I forgot it when writing to you—I had so much to say. The people really to blame are those who named it so."

"And that's true, and they ought to be shown up," said the Squire.

Seabord Terrace consisted of seven houses, built in front of the sea a little beyond the town. The parlours had bay windows; the drawing-rooms had balconies and verandahs. The two end houses, Nos. 1 and 7, were double houses, large and handsome, each of them being inhabited by a private family; the middle houses were smaller, most of them being let out in lodgings in the season. Mary Blair began talking that first evening as we sat together about the family who lived in the house next door to her, No. 7. Their name was Peahern, she said, and they had been so very, very kind to her since she took her house in March. Mr. Peahern had interested himself for her and got her several pupils; he was much respected at Saltwater. "Ah, he is a good man," she added; "but ——"

"I'll call and thank him," interrupted the Squire. "I am proud to shake hands with such a man as that."

"You cannot," she said; "he and his wife are gone abroad. A great misfortune has lately befallen them."

"A great misfortune! what was it?"

I noticed a kind of cloud pass over Mary Blair's face, a hesitation in her manner before she replied. Mrs. Todhetley was sitting by her on the sofa; the Squire was in the arm-chair opposite them, and I at the table, as I had sat at our tea-dinner.

"Mr. Peahern was in business once; a wholesale druggist, I believe; but he made a good fortune, and retired some years ago," began Mary. "Mrs. Peahern has poor health and is a little lame. She was very kind to me also; very good and kind indeed. They

had one son; no other children; I think he was studying for the Bar; I am not sure; but he lived in London and came down here occasionally. My young maid-servant, Susan, got acquainted with their servants, and she gathered from their gossip that he, Edmund Peahern, a very handsome young man, was in some way a trouble to his parents. He was down at Easter, and stayed three weeks; and in May he came down again. What happened I don't know; I believe there was some scene with his father the day he arrived; anyway, Mr. Peahern was heard talking angrily to him: and that night he—he died."

She had dropped her voice to a low whisper. The Squire spoke.

"Died! Was it a natural death?"

"No. A jury decided that he was insane; and he was buried here in the churchyard. Such a heap of claims and debts came to light, it was said. Mr. Peahern left his lawyer to pay them all, and went abroad with his poor wife for change of scene. It has been a great grief to me. I feel so sorry for them."

"Then, is the house shut up?"

"No. Two servants are left in it; the two housemaids. The cook, who had lived with them five-and-twenty years and was dreadfully affected at the calamity, went with her mistress. Nice, good-natured young women, are these two that are left, running in most days to ask if they can do anything for me."

"It is good to have such neighbours," said the Squire. "And I hope you'll get on, my dear. How came you at this place at all?"

"It was through Mr. Lockett," she answered: the clergyman who had been so much with her husband before he died, and who had kept up a correspondence with her. Mr. Lockett's brother was in practice as a doctor at Saltwater, and they thought she might perhaps do well if she came to it. So Mary's friends had screwed a point or two to put her into the house, and gave her besides a ten-pound note to start with.

"I tell you what it is, young Joe: if you run and reve yourself into that scarlet heat, you sha'n't come here with me again."

"But I like to race with the donkeys," replied young Joe. "I can run a'most as fast as they, Johnny. I like to see the donkeys."

"Wouldn't it be better to ride a donkey, lad?"

He shook his head. "I have never had a ride but once," he answered: "I've no sixpences for it. That once Matilda treated me. She brings me on the sands."

"Who is Matilda?"

"Matilda at No. 7: Mr. Peahern's."

"Well, if you are a good boy, young Joe, and stay by me, you shall have a ride as soon as the donkeys come back."

They were fine sands. I sat down on a bench with a book; little Joe strained his eyes to look after the donkeys in the distance, canter-

ing off with some young shavers like himself on their backs, their nursemaids walking quickly after them. Poor little Joe! —he had the gentlest, meekest face in the world, with his thoughtful look and nice eyes—waited and watched in silent patience. The sands were crowded with people this afternoon; organs were playing, dancing dolls exhibiting; and vessels with their white sails spread glided smoothly up and down on the sparkling sea.

"And will you really pay the sixpence?" asked the little fellow presently. "They won't let me get on for less."

"Really and truly, Joe. I'll take you for a row in a boat some calm day, if mamma will allow you to go."

Joe looked grave. "I don't *much* like the water, please," said he, timidly. "Alfred Dale went on it in a boat and fell in, and was nearly drowned. He comes to mamma's school."

"Then we'll let the boats alone, Joe. There's Punch! He is going to set himself up yonder: wouldn't you like to run and see him?"

"But I might miss the donkeys," answered Joe.

He stood by me quietly, gazing in the direction taken by the donkeys: evidently they made his primary attraction. The other child, Mary, who was a baby when her father died (poor Baked Pie, as we boys used to call him at Frost's), was in Wales with Mrs. Blair's people. They had taken the child for a few months, until she saw whether she should get along at Saltwater.

But we thought she would get along. Her school was a morning school for little boys of good parentage, all of whom paid liberal terms: and she would be able to let her best rooms for at least six months in the year.

"There's Matilda! Oh, there's Matilda!"

It was quite a loud shout for little Joe. Looking up, I saw him rush to a rather good-looking young woman, neatly dressed in a black-and-white print gown and small shawl of the same, with black ribbons crossed on her straw bonnet. Servants did not dress fine enough to set the Thames on fire in those days. Joe pulled her triumphantly up to me. She was one of the housemaids at No. 7.

"It's Matilda," he said: and the young woman curtsied. "And I am going to have a donkey-ride, Matilda: Mr. Johnny Ludlow's going to give the sixpence for me!"

"I know you by sight, sir," observed Matilda to me. "I have seen you go in and out of No. 6."

She had a pale olive complexion, with magnificent, melancholy dark eyes. Many persons would have called her handsome. I took a sort of liking for the girl—if only for her kindness to poor little fatherless Joe. In manner she was particularly quiet, subdued, and patient.

"You had a sad misfortune at your house not long ago," I observed to her, at a loss for something to say.

"Oh sir, don't talk of it, please!" she answered with a sob of the

breath. "I seem to have the shivers at times ever since. It was me that found him."

Up cantered the donkeys: and presently away went Joe on the back of one, Matilda attending him. The ride was just over and Joe beginning to enlarge on its delights to me, when another young woman, dressed precisely similar to Matilda, even to the zigzag white running pattern on the print gown, and the black cotton gloves, was seen making her way towards us. She was nice looking also in a different way; fair, with blue eyes, and a laughing, arch face.

"Why, there's Jane Cross!" exclaimed Matilda. "What in the world have you come out for, Jane?" Have you left the house safe?"

"As if I should leave it unsafe!" lightly retorted the one they had called Jane Cross. "The back door's locked, and here's the key of the front—showing a huge key. Why shouldn't I go out if you do? —come, Matilda! The house is none so lively a one now, to stop in all alone."

"And that's true enough," was Matilda's quiet answer. "Little master Joe's here: he has been having a donkey-ride."

The two servants, fellow-housemaids, strolled off towards the sea, taking Joe with them. At the edge of the beach they encountered Hannah, who had just come on with our two children, Hugh and Lena. The maids sat down for a gossip, while the children took off their shoes and stockings to dabble in the gently-rising tide.

And that was my introductory acquaintanceship with the servant maids at No. 7. Unfortunately it did not end there.

Twilight was coming on. We had been out and about all day, had dined as usual at one o'clock (not to give unnecessary trouble) and had just finished tea in Mrs. Blair's parlour. It was where we generally took tea, and supper also. The Squire liked to sit in the open bay window and watch the passers-by as long as ever a glimmer of daylight lasted: and he could not see them so well in the drawing-room above. I was at the other corner of the bay window. The Mater and Mary Blair were on their favourite seat, the sofa, at the end of the room, both knitting. In the room at the back, Mary held her morning school.

I sat facing towards the end house, No. 7. And I must here say that during the last two or three weeks I had met the house maids several times on the sands, and so had become quite at home with each of them. Both appeared to be thoroughly well-conducted, estimable young women; but, of the two, I liked Jane Cross best, she was always so lively and pleasant-mannered. One day, she told me why No. 7 generally called her by her two names—which I had thought rather odd. It appeared that when she entered her place two years before, the other housemaid was named Jane, so they took to call her by her full name, Jane

Cross. That housemaid had left in about a twelvemonth, and Matilda had entered in her place. The servants were regarded as equals in the house, not one above the other, as is the case in many places. These details will probably be thought unnecessary and uncalled for, but you will soon see why I mention them. This was Monday. On the morrow we should have been three weeks at Saltwater, and the Squire did not yet talk of leaving. He was enjoying the free-and-easy life, and was as fond as a child of picking up shells on the sands and looking at Punch and the dancing dolls.

Well, we sat this evening in the bay window as usual, I facing No. 7. Thus sitting, I saw Matilda cross the strip of garden with a jug in her hand, and come out of the gate to fetch the beer for supper.

"There goes Jane Cross," cried the Squire, as she passed the window. "Is it not, Johnny?"

"No sir, it's Matilda." But the mistake was a very natural one, for the girls were about the same height and size, and were usually dressed alike, the same mourning having been supplied to both of them.

Ten minutes, or so, had elapsed when Matilda came back: she liked a gossip with the landlady of the Swan. She had her pint jug full of beer, and shut the iron gate of No. 7 after her. Putting my head as far out at the window as it would go, to watch her indoors, for no earthly reason but that I had nothing else to do, I saw her try the front door, and then knock at it. This knock she repeated three times over at intervals, each knock being louder than the last.

"Are you shut out, Matilda?" I called out.

"Yes, sir, it seems like it," she called back again, without turning her head. "Jane Cross must be gone to sleep."

Had she been a footman with a carriage full of ladies in court trains behind him, she could not have given a louder or longer knock than she gave now. There was no bell to the front door at No. 7. But the knock remained unanswered and the door unopened.

"Matilda at No. 7 is locked out," I said, laughing, bringing in my head and speaking to the parlour generally. "She has been to fetch the supper beer and can't get in again."

"The supper beer," repeated Mrs. Blair. "They generally go out, at the back gate to fetch that, Johnny."

"Anyhow, she took the front way to-night. I saw her come out."

Another tremendous knock. The Squire put his good old nose round the window-post; two boys and a lady, passing by, halted a minute to look on. It was getting exciting, and I ran out. She was still at the door, which stood in the middle of the house, between the sitting-rooms on each side.

"So you have got the key of the street, Matilda!"

"I can't make it out," she said: "what Jane Cross can be about, or why the door should be closed at all. I left it on the latch."

"Somebody has slipped in to make love to her. Your friend, the milkman, perhaps."

Evidently Matilda did not like the allusion to the milkman: catching a glimpse of her face by the street gas-lamp, I saw it had turned white. The milkman was supposed to be paying court at No. 7: but to which of the two maids gossip did not decide. Mrs. Blair's Susan, who knew them well, said it was Matilda.

"Why don't you try the back way?" I asked, after more waiting.

"Because I know the outer door is locked, sir. Jane Cross locked it just now, and that's why I came out this front way. I can try it."

She went round to the road that ran by the side of the house, and tried the door in the garden wall. It was fastened, as she had said. Seizing the bell-handle, she gave a loud peal. Another, and another.

"I say, it seems odd, though," I cried, beginning to find it so. "Do you think she can have gone out?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sir. But—no; it's not likely, Master Johnny. I left her laying the cloth for our supper."

"Was she in the house alone?"

"We are always alone, sir; we don't have visitors. Anyway, none have been with us this evening."

I looked at the upper windows of the house. No light was to be seen in any of them, no sign of Jane Cross. The lower windows were hidden from view by the wall—which was high.

"I think she must have dropped asleep, Matilda. Suppose you come in through Mrs. Blair's and get over the wall?"

I ran round to tell the news to our people. Matilda followed me slowly; I thought, reluctantly. Even in the dim twilight, as she stood at our gate in hesitation, I could see how white her face was.

"What are you afraid of?" I asked her, going out again to where she stood.

"I hardly know, Master Johnny. Jane Cross used to have fits. Perhaps she has been frightened into one."

"What should frighten her?"

The girl looked round in a scared manner before replying. Just then I found my jacket sleeve wet. Her trembling hands had shaken some drops of the ale upon it.

"If she—should have seen Mr. Edmund?" the girl brought out in a horrified whisper.

"Seen Mr. Edmund! Mr. Edmund who?—Mr. Edmund Peahern? Why! You don't surely mean his ghost?"

Her face was growing whiter. I stared at her in surprise.

"We have always been afraid of seeing something, she and me, since last May: we haven't liked the house at night-time. It has often been quite a scuffle which of us should fetch the beer, so as not to be the one left alone. Many a time I have stood right out at the back door while Jane Cross has gone for it."

I began to think her an idiot. If Jane Cross was another, why

perhaps she had scared herself into a fit. All the more reason that somebody should see after her.

"Come along, Matilda, don't be foolish: we'll get over the wall."

It was a calm, still summer evening, nearly dark now. All the lot of us went out to the back garden, I whispering to them what the girl had said to me.

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. Todhetley, who had a kind of fellow-feeling for ghosts. "It has been very lonely for the young women: and if Jane Cross is subject to fits, she may be lying in one."

The wall between the gardens was nothing like as high as the outer one. Susan brought out a chair, and Matilda could have got over easily. But when she reached the top she stuck there.

"I can't go on by myself; I dare not," she said, turning her scared face towards us. "If Mr. Edmund is there——"

"Don't thee be a goose, girl!" interrupted the Squire, in doubt whether to laugh or scold. "Here, I'll go with you. Get on down. Hold the chair tight for me, Johnny."

We hoisted him over without damage. I leaped after him, and Susan, grinning with delight, came after me. She supposed that Jane Cross had slipped out somewhere during Matilda's absence.

The door faced the garden, and the Squire and Susan were the first to enter. There seemed to be no light anywhere, and the Squire went gingerly, picking his way. I turned round to look for Matilda, who had hung back, and found her with her hand on the trellis work of the porch, and the beer shaking over.

"I say, look here, Matilda: you must be a regular goose, as the Squire says, to put yourself into this fright before you know whether there's any cause for it. Susan says she has only stepped out somewhere."

She put up her hand and touched my arm, panting like mad. Her lips were the colour of chalk.

"Only last night that ever was, Mr. Johnny, as we were going up the staircase to bed, we heard a sound in the room as we passed it. It was just like a groan. Ask Jane Cross, else, sir."

"What room?"

"Mr. Edmund's: where he did it. She has heard him to-night, or seen him, or something, and has got a fit."

The kitchen was on the right of the passage. Susan, knowing the ways of the house, soon lighted a candle. On a small round table was spread a white cloth, some bread and cheese, and two tumblers. A knife or two had seemingly been flung on it at random.

"Jane Cross! Jane Cross!" shouted the Squire, going forward towards the front hall, Susan following with the candle. It was a good-sized hall; I could see that; with a handsome well-staircase at this end of it.

"Halloa! What's this? Johnny! Susan!—all of you come here.

Here's somebody lying here. It must be the poor girl. Goodness bless my heart! Johnny, help me to raise her."

Still and white she was lying, underneath the opening of the staircase. Upon lifting her head, it fell back in a curious manner. We both backed a little. Susan held the candle nearer. As its light fell on the upturned face, the girl shrieked.

"She has got a fit," cried Matilda.

"God help her!" whispered the Squire. "I fear this is something worse than a fit. We must have a doctor."

Susan thrust the candlestick into my hand and ran out at the back door, saying she'd fetch Mr. Lockett. Back she came in a moment: the garden gate was locked and the key not in it.

"There's the front door, girl, stuttered the Squire in a passion, angry with her for returning, though it was no fault of hers. He was like one off his head, and his nose and cheeks had turned blue.

But there could be no more egress by the front door than the back. It was locked, and the key gone. Who had done these things? what strange mystery was here? Locking the poor girl in the house to kill her!

Matilda, who had lighted another candle, found the key of the back gate lying on the kitchen dresser. Susan caught it up, and flew away. It was a most uncomfortable moment: there lay Jane Cross, pale and motionless, and it seemed that we were helpless to aid her.

"Ask that stupid thing to bring a pillow or a cushion, Johnny. Ghosts, indeed! The idiots that women are!"

"What else has done it?—what else was there to hurt her?" remonstrated Matilda, bringing up the second candle. "She'd not go into a fit for nothing, sir."

And now that more light was present, we began to see other features of the scene. Nearly close to Jane Cross lay a work-basket, overturned: a flat open basket, a foot and a half square. Reels of cotton, scissors, tapes, small bundles of work tied up, and such like things, lay scattered around.

The Squire looked at these, and then at the opening above. "Can she have fallen down the well?" he asked, in a low tone. And Matilda, catching the words, gave a great cry of dismay, and burst into tears.

"A pillow, girl. A pillow, or a cushion."

She went into one of the sitting-rooms and brought out a thick sofa cushion. The Squire, going down on his knees, for he was not good at stooping, told me to slip it under while he raised the head.

A sound of stalking feet, a sudden flash of light from a bull's-eye, and a policeman came upon the scene. The man was quietly passing on his beat when met by Susan. In her excitement she told him what had happened, and sent him in. We knew the man, whose beat lay at this end of Saltwater; a civil man, named Knapp. He

knelt down where the Squire had just been kneeling, touching Jane Cross here and there.

"She's dead, sir," he said. "There can be no mistake about that."

"She must have fallen down the well of the staircase, I fear," observed the Squire.

"Well—yes; perhaps so," assented the man in a doubtful tone. "But what of this?"

He flung the great light on the front of poor Jane Cross's dress. A small portion of the gown-body, where it fastened in front, had been torn away; as well as one of the sleeve wristbands.

"It's no fall," said the man. "It is foul play—as I think."

"Goodness bless me!" gasped the Squire. "Some villains must have got in. This comes of that other one's having left the front door on the latch." But I am not sure that any of us, including himself, believed she could be really dead.

Susan returned with speed, and was followed by Mr. Lockett. He was a young man, thirty perhaps, pale and quiet, and much like what I remembered of his brother. Poor Jane Cross was certainly dead, he said: had been dead, he thought, an hour.

But this could scarcely have been—as we knew. It was not, at the very utmost, above twenty-five minutes since Matilda went out to fetch the beer, leaving her alive and well. Mr. Lockett looked again, but thought he was not mistaken. When a young doctor takes up a crotchet, he likes to hold to it.

A nameless sensation of awe fell upon us all. Dead! In that sudden manner! The Squire rubbed up his head like a helpless lunatic; Susan's eyes were round with horror; Matilda had thrown her apron over her face to hide its grief and tears.

Leaving her for the present where she was, we turned to go upstairs. I stooped to pick up the overturned basket, but the policeman sharply told me to let all things stay as they were until he had time to look into them.

The first thing the man did, on reaching the landing above, was to open the room doors one by one,and throw his bull's-eye light into them. They were all right; unoccupied, straight and tidy. On the landing of the upper floor lay one or two articles, which seemed to indicate that some kind of struggle had taken place there. A thimble here, a bodkin there; also the bit that had been torn out of the girl's gown in front and the wristband from the sleeve. The balustrades were very handsome but very low; on this upper landing, dangerously low. These bedrooms were all in order; the one in which the two servants slept, alone showing signs of occupation.

Downstairs went Knapp again, carrying with him the torn-out pieces, to compare them with the gown. It was the print gown I had often seen Jane Cross wear: a black gown with white zigzag lines running down it. Matilda was wearing the fellow to it now. The pieces fitted in exactly.

"The struggle must have taken place upstairs: not here," observed the doctor.

Matilda, questioned and cross-questioned by the policeman, gave as succinct an account of the evening as her distressed state allowed. We stood round the kitchen while she told it.

Neither she nor Jane Cross had gone out at all that day. Monday was rather a busy day with them, for they generally did a bit of washing. After tea, which they took between four and five o'clock, they went up to their bedroom, it being livelier there than in the kitchen, the window looking down the side road. Matilda sat down to write a letter to her brother, who lived at a distance; Jane Cross sat at the window doing a job of sewing. They sat there all the evening, writing, working, and sometimes talking. At dusk, Jane remarked that it was getting Blindman's holiday, and that she should go on down stairs and put the supper. Upon that, Matilda finished her letter quickly, folded and directed it, and followed her down. Jane had not yet laid the cloth, but was then taking it out of the drawer. "You go and fetch the beer, Matilda," she said: and Matilda was glad to do so. "You can't go that way: I have locked the gate," Jane called out, seeing Matilda turning towards the back; accordingly she went out at the front door, leaving it on the latch. Such was her account; and I have given it almost verbatim.

"On the latch," repeated the policeman, taking up the words. "Does that mean that you left it open?"

"I drew it quite to, so that it looked as if it were shut; it was a heavy door, and would keep so," was Matilda's answer. "I did it, not to give Jane the trouble to open it to me. When I got back I found it shut and could not get in."

The policeman mused. "You say it was Jane Cross who locked the back door in the wall?"

"Yes," said Matilda. "She had locked it before I got downstairs. We liked to lock that door early, because it could be opened from the outside—while the front door could not be."

"And she had not put these things on the table when you went out for the beer?"—pointing to the dishes.

"No: she was only then putting the cloth. As I turned round from taking the beer-jug from its hook, the fling she gave the cloth caused the air of it to whiffle in my face like a wind. She had not begun to reach out the dishes."

"How long were you away?"

"I don't know exactly," she answered, with a moan. "Rather longer than usual, because I took my letter to the post before going to the Swan."

"It was about ten minutes," I interposed. "I was at the window next door, and saw Matilda go out and come back."

"Ten minutes!" repeated the policeman. "Quite long enough for some ruffian to come in and fling her over the stairs."

"But who would do it?" asked Matilda, looking up at him with her poor pale face.

"Ah, that's the question; that's what we must find out," said Knapp. "Was the kitchen just as it was when you left it?"

"Yes—except that she had put the bread and cheese on the table. And the glasses, and knives," added the girl, looking round at the said table, which remained as we had found it, "but not the plates."

"Well now, to go to something else: Did she bring her work-basket downstairs with her from the bedroom when she remarked to you that she would go and put the supper on?"

"No, she did not."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes. She left the basket on the chair in front of her where it had been standing. She just got up and shook the threads from off her gown, and went on down. When I left the room the basket was there; I saw it. And I think," added the girl, with a great sob, "I think that while putting the supper she must have gone upstairs again to fetch the basket, and must have fallen against the banisters with fright, and overbalanced herself."

"Fright at what?" asked Knapp.

Matilda shivered. Susan whispered to him that they were afraid at night of seeing the ghost of Mr. Edmund Peahern.

The man glanced keenly at Matilda for a minute. "Did you ever see it?" he asked.

"No," she shuddered. "But there are strange noises, and we think it is in the house."

"Well," said Knapp, coughing to hide a comical smile," ghosts don't tear pieces out of gowns—that ever I heard of. I should say it was something worse than a ghost that has been here to-night. Had this poor girl any sweetheart?"

"No," said Matilda.

"Have you one?"

"No."

"Except Owen the milkman."

A scarlet streak flashed into Matilda's cheeks. I knew Owen: he was Mrs. Blair's milkman also.

"I think Owen must be your sweetheart or hers," went on Knapp. "I've seen him, often enough, talking and laughing with you both when bringing the afternoon's milk round. Ten minutes at a stretch he has stayed in this garden, when he need not have been as many moments."

"There has been no harm: and it's nothing to anybody," said Matilda.

The key of the front door was searched for, high and low; but it could not be found. Whoever locked the door, must have made off with the key. But for that, and for the evidences of the scuffle above and the pieces torn out of the gown, we should have thought Matilda's

opinion was correct: that Jane Cross had gone upstairs for her basket, and through some wretched accident had pitched over the balustrades. Matilda could not relinquish the notion.

"It was only a week ago that ever was; a week ago this very day; that Jane Cross nearly fell over there. We were both running upstairs, trying in sport which should get first into our bedroom; and, in jostling one another on the landing, she all but overbalanced herself. I caught hold of her to save her. It's true—if it were the last word I had to speak."

Matilda broke down, with a dreadful fit of sobbing. Altogether she struck me as being about as excitable a young woman as one could meet in a summer day's journey.

Nothing more could be made out of it this evening. Jane Cross had met her death, and some evil or other must have led to it. The police took possession of the house for the night: and Matilda, out of compassion, was brought to ours. To describe the Mater's shock and Mary Blair's, when they heard the news, would be beyond me.

All sorts of conjectures arose in the neighbourhood. The most popular belief was that some person must have perceived the front door open, and, whether with a good or an ill intention, entered the house; that he must have stolen upstairs, met Jane Cross on the top landing, and flung her down in a scuffle. That he must then have let himself out at the front door and locked it after him.

Against this theory there were obstacles. From the time of Matilda's leaving the house till her return, certainly not more than ten minutes had elapsed, perhaps not quite as much, and this was a very short space of time for what had been done in it. Moreover the chances were that I, sitting at the next window, should have seen anyone going in or out; though it was not of course certain. I had got up once to ring the bell, and stayed a minute or two away from the window, talking with Mary Blair and the Mater.

Some people thought the assassin (is it too much to call him so?) had been admitted by Jane Cross herself; or he might have been in hiding in the garden before she locked the door. In short, the various opinions would fill a volume.

But suspicion fell chiefly upon one person—and that was Thomas Owen the milkman. Though, perhaps, "suspicion" is too strong a word to give to it—I ought rather to say "doubt." These Owens were originally from Wales, very respectable people. The milk business was their own; and, since the father's death, which happened only a few months before, the son had carried it on in conjunction with his mother. He was a young man of three or four-and-twenty, with a fresh colour and open countenance, rather superior in his manners and education. The carrying out the milk himself was a temporary arrangement, the boy employed for it being ill. That he had often lingered at No. 7, laughing with the two young women, was well known; he had also been seen to accost them in the street.

Only the previous day, he and Matilda had stayed talking in the churchyard after morning service when everybody else had left it; and he had walked up nearly as far as Seabord Terrace with Jane Cross in the evening. A notion existed that he had entered the house on the Monday evening, for who else was it likely to have been, cried everybody. Which was, of course, logic. At last a rumour arose—arose on the Tuesday—that Owen had been *seen* to leave the house at dusk on the fatal evening; that this could be proved. If so, it looked rather black. I was startled, for I had liked the man.

The next day, Wednesday, the key was found. A gardener who did up the gardens of the other end house, No. 1, every Wednesday, was raking the ground underneath some dwarf pines that grew close against the front railings, and raked out a big door-key. About fifteen people came rushing off with it to No. 7.

It was the missing key. It fitted into the door at once, locked and unlocked it. When the villain had made his way from the house after doing the mischief, he must have flung the key over amidst the pines, thinking no doubt it would lie hidden there.

The coroner and jury assembled; but they could not make more of the matter than we had made. Jane Cross had died of the fall down the well staircase, which had broken her neck; and it was pretty evident she had been flung down. Beyond the one chief and fatal injury, she was not harmed in any way; not by so much as a scratch. Matilda, whose surname turned out to be Valentine, having got over the first shock, gave her testimony with subdued composure. She was affected at parts of it, and said she would have saved Jane Cross's life with her own: and no one could doubt that she spoke the truth. She persisted in asserting her opinion that there had been no scuffle, in spite of appearances; but that the girl had been terrified in some way and had accidentally fallen over.

When Matilda was done with, Thomas Owen took her place. He was all in black, having dressed himself to come to the inquest and wearing mourning for his father; and I must say, looking at him now, you'd never have supposed he carried out milk-pails.

Yes, he had known the poor young woman in question, he readily said in answer to questions; had been fond of chaffing with the two girls a bit, but nothing more. Meant nothing by it, nothing serious. Respected both of them; regarded them as perfectly well-conducted young women.—Was either of them his sweetheart? Certainly not. Had not courted either of them. Never thought of either of them as his future wife: should not consider a servant eligible for that position—at least, his mother would not. Of the two, he had liked Jane Cross the best. Did not know anything whatever of the circumstances attending the death; thought it a most deplorable calamity, and was never more shocked in his life than when he heard of it.

"Is there any truth in the report that you were at the house on Monday evening?" asked the coroner.

"There is no truth in it."

"I see him come out o' No. 7: I see him come out o' the side door in the garden wall," burst forth a boy's earnest voice from the back of the room.

"You saw me *not* come out of it," quietly replied Thomas Owen, turning round to see who it was that had spoken. "Oh, it is you, is it, Bob Jackson! Yes, you came running round the corner just as I turned from the door."

"You *were* there then?" cried the coroner.

"No, sir. At the door, yes; that's true enough; but I was not inside it. What happened was this: on Monday I had some business at a farm-house near Munpler, and set out to walk over there early in the evening. In passing down the side road by No. 7, I saw the two maids at the top window. One of them—I think it was Jane Cross—called out to ask me in a joking kind of way whether I was about to pay them a visit; I answered, not then, but I would as I came back if they liked. Accordingly, in returning, I rang the bell. It was not answered, and I rang again with a like result. Upon that, I went straight home to my milk books, and did not stir out again, as my mother can prove. That is the truth, sir, on my oath; and all the truth."

"What time was this?"

"I am not quite sure. It was getting dusk."

"Did you see anything of the young women this second time?"

"Not anything."

"Or hear anything?—Any noise?"

"None whatever. I supposed that they would not come to the door to me because it was late: I thought nothing else. I declare, sir, that this is all I know of the matter."

There was a pause when he concluded. Knapp, the policeman, and another one standing by his side, peered at Owen from under their eyebrows, as if they did not put implicit faith in his words: and the coroner recalled Matilda Valentine.

She readily confirmed the statement of his having passed along the side road, and Jane Cross's joking question to him. But she denied having heard him ring on his return, and said the door-bell had not rung at all that night. Which would seem to prove that Owen must have rung during the time she had gone out for the beer.

So, you perceive, the inquest brought forth no more available light, and had to confess itself baffled.

"A fine termination this is to our pleasure," cried the Squire, gloomily. "I don't like mysteries, Johnny. And of all the mysteries I have come across in my life, the greatest mystery is this at No. 7."

But mysteries, like murder, will "out" in time. And the reader shall hear the conclusion of this one next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

By the Author of "A Night in a Monastery."

"ALL roads lead to Rome:" and the intelligent reader is aware that many roads lead to Holland. Yet comparatively few people find their way into the interior of the Dutch provinces: and Holland, so near our shores, is to many of us as much a sealed book as are the bush ranges of Australia or the vast prairies of California.

There are many reasons for this: though the Dutch would tell you that none of them would bear sifting. It is not the fashion to go to Holland: and for most people, to be out of the fashion is to be out of the world. It is just now the fashion for women to be strong-minded and masculine; and very much in the fashion they are. But that has nothing to do with Holland. There the women are content to be women, whatever their age or degree. Ay, and very pretty women too.

I have said that it is not the fashion to visit Holland. It is the thing to go and see the sun rise without setting on a midsummer night in Norway; to stand the chance of an embrace from a friendly bear in Russia; to do violence to one's feelings by eating candles with the Laplanders; to shake fins with the interesting inhabitants of Finland. It has not been the fashion to visit Turkey during the past season. It has never been the fashion to visit Holland.

And yet there is a good deal to repay in a visit to this little kingdom; if it be only to rectify some of our preconceived and existing notions respecting the people and the country. Two of these notions only, as far as I am concerned, proved correct. I had an idea that Holland was very flat. Its flatness cannot be disputed by the most distorted mind. I believed there was much water to be found there. It is a case of "water, water everywhere." And it might almost be added: "not a drop to drink."

But the Mynheer Van Dunck specimen of a Dutchman: the heavy paterfamilias type, smoking his after-dinner pipe between the intervals of eating, sleeping, and counting over his hoards in his warehouse overlooking the canal: this type, if it ever existed, appears to have become extinct—like certain craters and antediluvian animals. The ponderous Dutch Vrouw, with hips measuring her stature, sleepy eyes and fat cheeks, is no longer visible. She too has departed, with the light of other days—her phlegmatic husband.

What they are now, I will endeavour to describe as we proceed. We have first to reach Holland: and we are not there yet.

I had long wished to visit Holland and had not done so. Perhaps because the desire was so easy to gratify. Perhaps because there is a time for all things, and my time for Holland had not yet dawned.

But it came at last: in the shape of a sudden resolution and my friend A.

A. had long desired to penetrate into the mysteries of Holland, for sketching purposes. But not being of a penetrating turn of mind, he did not care to venture alone upon so bold an undertaking. I assured him I should be very glad of his company.

"Never less alone than when alone," is all very well when applied to home; where you are shut up in your study, between walls lined with silent friends who talk to you often much more sensibly than many a chattering one. But when abroad on your travels, the proverb fails signally. You then need a companion: and if that companion be of a like and congenial turn of mind, prepare yourself for unbounded felicity. If he be not, leave him by all means behind you.

The night before starting, I left the sea: where for weeks I had listened to its beat upon the shore, and watched the moon rising above the horizon and gradually throwing her silvery pathway across the wide stretch of waters; and, returning to London, went down to A. to see that his courage held out to the last. I found him in a state of mental excitement and bodily exertion. He was packing up. He had been packing up the greater part of the day. Two portmanteaux; a bag, a hat-box, a fishing-basket; three rugs, a macintosh and a great-coat; five changes of outer raiment, fifteen of inner; three boxes of pills, four ounces of quinine-and-iron, and a guide-book. Such was his moderate amount of luggage.

Staring aghast till speech came to me, I represented to him that as we were not going on a week's visit to the Court of Holland, his preparations were unnecessary, unreasonable, and impossible. After a large amount of persuasion, he at length came down to one portmanteau and a fishing-basket.

"But why so much physic?" I exclaimed. "You have a supply of quinine there for ten years. Why any at all?"

"Damp, my dear fellow," he cried, in hollow tones; "damp. Remember what Holland is. We may be half our time under water, exposed to malaria and fever, and I know not what combination of evils. Oh! I assure you no earthly power would induce me to stir without a moderate allowance of this invaluable medicine."

Amid the various routes at our command, we had chosen the long sea passage, direct from London to Rotterdam. Chosen it for the sake of the sea. It is a route to be recommended to all who have time at their command, are good sailors, and travel at a season of the year when calm weather is prevalent. The passage money is one pound. The General Steam Navigation Company's boats are good; the berths are as comfortable as can be expected. The length of the journey is from twenty to twenty-four hours.

It was the 23rd of August, and the morning could not have been finer. The sun shone brilliantly, and our spirits caught the influence

as we drove through London to St. Katherine's Wharf. The steamer was not alongside, and passengers in various stages of expectation and excitement were waiting for the tug to come up and convey them to the vessel. The boat was to have started at eleven ; but they were behind-hand with the cargo, and we did not finally steam away before mid-day.

There are few things of their kind more enjoyable than going down our own River Thames. The stream is wide and imposing. The immense amount of traffic upon its surface gives perpetual life and change to the scene : a scene not to be equalled elsewhere in the wide world. The banks on either side are lined with buildings old and crazy enough to satisfy the lover of antiquity and put them far above the commonplace. Each bend of the river opens out some new

The Maas.

feature. Approaching the sea, the river expands into positive beauty and dignity : and homeward-bound vessels, gliding upwards, with all sails set and decks as clean as a new pin, are the objects of unbounded admiration.

As they were with us to-day. Gradually making way, one well-known landmark after another was left behind : last of all at the Point's End, the North Foreland : the white lighthouse visible with the help of a telescope. For it was now seven o'clock. Just before this we passed a bell-buoy, its iron tongue with every sway of the water ringing out a warning to mariners. We watched the North Foreland light up its brilliant beacon as the sun went down ; the stars came out one by one ; and very soon it was night.

But it was pleasant on deck, if somewhat chilly. Pleasant to watch lights here and there at anchor, or gliding along in the vast sweep of blackness that surrounded us. Pleasant to watch the countless

multitude of stars. Pleasant to watch the track made by the ship, lighted and sparkling with a thousand phosphorescent gems. Pleasant to enjoy to the full that feeling of grandeur, of eternity and the eternal, of illimitable space, which never fails to take possession of the mind when on the ocean at night.

The next morning at five o'clock, we entered the Maas. Just before doing so the ship began pitching and rolling, especially when passing over the bar, which at low tide has only seven feet of water above it. But we were soon in calm waters again. To our left, stretching towards the sea, was a low muddy sand-bank, called the Hoek van Holland—the Corner of Holland: eighteen or twenty miles from Rotterdam.

Now for our first view of Dutch territory. It was little enough as

NEWHAVEN CANAL.

yet. A long reach of flat banks, almost level with the water; long green grass, or grass closely cropped; a few stunted trees here and there. Such were first impressions.

We went on and on. The meadows widened; the trees grew more numerous. At last a spire or an old tower might be discerned, conspicuous objects in a bare horizon; a few painted cottages upon the banks of the river; herds of cattle grazing. Flocks of sea-gulls perched upon the wooden piles standing out of the water; occasionally the white beautiful birds resting upon the water itself. Gradually more life and animation crept over the scene. We passed an old, quaint, fortified town on the left, which turned out to be Brielle; famous as having been the birthplace of Van Tromp, and also the first place taken from the Spaniards in 1572, by the Beggars of the Sea. In 1585 it was delivered over to Queen Elizabeth and retained by the English until 1616.

Nearer Rotterdam we passed Schiedam, though it is not built on the banks of the river. This place, if not surrounded by any historical halo, is of world-wide notoriety for its gin distilleries; a nauseous decoction obtained from malt, flavoured with the essential oil of Juniper. It must have been Schiedam that Mynheer Van Dunck imbibed so freely, though for the sake of rhythm the poet has written it whiskey. We all know the words of the old song. How

> "Mynheer Van Dunck, though he never got drunk,
> Drank whiskey and water gaily;
> He quenched his thirst with a quart of the first
> To a pint of the latter daily."

It was impossible not to think of the lines in connexion with Scheidam: and to wonder whether we should meet with many such specimens as Mynheer Van Dunck with the same extraordinary capacity for unlimited potations, ere our travels through Holland came to an end.

The first stage came to an end soon after this. A sudden turn of the river, and Rotterdam, with its fine quays, stood before us.

A wonderfully clean-looking place. A long row of well-built houses, with pointed gable roofs and ancient outlines, but modern facings: a wide thoroughfare: a long row of trees, planted at equal distances: this was the Boomptjies. A fine, wide sweep of river, crowded with shipping; vessels of all sizes and nations. Such was our first glimpse, our first impression of Rotterdam. We steamed on until we reached the landing stage reserved for the vessels of the Company.

The boat was immediately boarded by any number of porters. Each one would have seized a package had he not been restrained; and each one would have expected a full gratuity on arriving at the hotel. Ten porters, say, and ten gratuities, for the work of one man. This is one of the evils to be guarded against by travellers in Holland—the rapacity of the porters. Whether at railway stations, or on the quays, or whether they be small guides piloting you about some unknown place, they are all alike extortionate and unjust in their charges. To begin with, they invariably lay it down as a rule to demand double the amount given to them, whatever that amount may be: and most people weakly yield rather than take the trouble of refusing. I remember well, at one of the railway stations, a porter had seized upon my small black bag, which I had been about to take up. Carrying it ten yards at most, he placed it in the carriage. I gave him a sum equivalent to fourpence for doing what I would have preferred to do myself. This did not please him at all. He wanted double. "Englishman gentleman! Englishman gentleman!" he ejaculated, with a self-confidence in his charm that proved it must have been the Open Sesame to many a purse. But in this instance the charm failed, and he very quickly changed it into a muttered malediction as he shuffled off.

Our destination in Rotterdam was the New Bath Hotel on the Boomptjies. Before we landed, an old man respectably dressed, and having altogether a paternal aspect, came up to us, and demanded if we were not for that inn; and was certainly of use in moderating the ardour of the men who were attempting to take the luggage. So at last we set foot upon Dutch soil, and were piloted down the quay to our quarters. The old man proved to be one of the guides attached to the hotel, and very soon informed us that he had formed special plans for our benefit. We dispensed with his services after the first day, but it required some firmness to induce him to accept his congé.

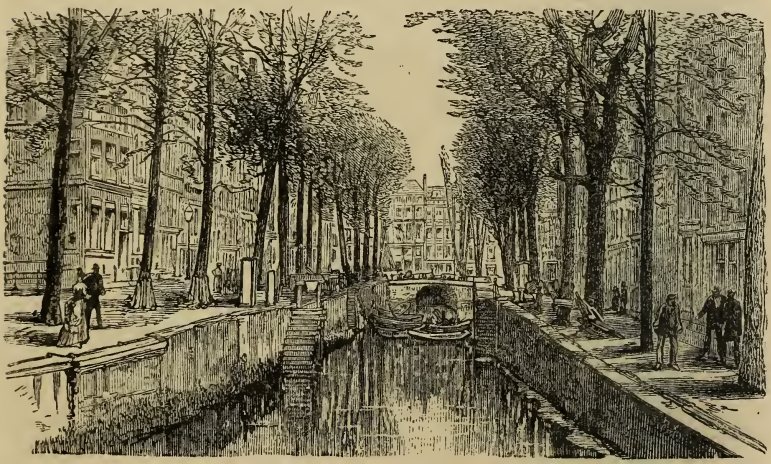
The first thing that struck me on entering the room given to me was the pleasantness of the view from its windows. It looked on the Boomptjies. Below us was the lively, noisy quay, with its long row of evenly-planted trees; each tree seemingly of an exact size, and placed at precisely the same distance one from another. Dutchmen were passing to and fro, all apparently full of life and business; most of them betraying an energy of look and manner that reminded one very forcibly of the English. The slow gait and dull look said to distinguish this people were nowhere apparent. Before us was the harbour, with its multitude of shipping; flags of all nations flying in the breeze. Particularly we noticed the long thin streamers at the mast-head, which are never carried by our merchant vessels in England but which are so graceful as they bend and curl to the wind. The Maas here is about forty feet deep, so that the largest vessels can come close up to the houses. To our left some immense engineering works were going forward. A railway bridge spanned the Maas, which here is very wide. It was a magnificent piece of workmanship. But necessity is the mother of invention, and the Dutch are born engineers. If their skill were to fail, or their vigilance to relax, their country would soon be under water, and the sea reclaim its own.

The Boomptjies are the pleasantest and liveliest part of Rotterdam. Should anyone, going thither, descend, as the French say, at the New Bath Hotel, let him stipulate for a room facing the quay. True, he will be awakened betimes in the morning with the noise of cattle being driven along to the ships that are to convey them to other lands, if not other pastures. He will perhaps be inclined now and then to hurl perfectly inefficient anathemas at the ponderous, low Dutch waggons that seem all wheels and body and no sides, like a Harry Longlegs, as they tear along with a noise equal to a hundred pieces of artillery. But on the whole this will be pardoned for the sake of the liveliness of the ever-changing scene. It will also afford him an opportunity of contemplating Dutch human nature of various degrees, and either sex.

That first morning we very quickly made acquaintance with the mysteries of a Dutch breakfast-table. The coffee was super-excellent, and in no other hotel in Holland could we bestow similar praise. In

every other place the coffee was inferior, in some it was not drinkable. Tea, not coffee, is the more universal beverage with the Dutch. And their tea ought to be as much eulogized, all the world over, as the coffee of France. The bread was equally delicious; a rule that held good, without exception, throughout Holland. I have never tasted such elsewhere. And the butter—but here I must halt. If I were to attempt to sing the praises of the butter as they ought to be sung, I should have all the cows and all the dairymaids in Holland coming up to do homage before me. The kine would be easily disposed of: but the maidens, with their pretty faces and bright eyes, would prove a more dangerous embarras de richesses.

We issued forth that morning after breakfast, to reconnoitre, under the pilotage of the irrepressible guide.



GLASHAVEN CANAL.

One of the first things to strike a stranger as he walks through this city, the second in importance in Holland, is the peculiar and contradictory aspect of the houses: the quaintness of their outline. Not the stiff, straight, ugly lines of our own houses of the Queen Anne period and later, but the picturesque, gabled 16th and 17th century style. But the contradictory and disappointing element is that, whilst the outlines of the houses carry you so far back in the world's history, their faces and fronts are but of yesterday. The Dutch have a mania for painting, but they appear to possess very little talent for blending colours harmoniously. Every year, or at the most two years, their houses, one and all, are painted in all parts. The window-sashes, perhaps, are picked out white, the doors green, the remainder of the woodwork of red, brown, or blue; all colours chosen at the fancy of the occupant or painter. Nothing escapes. In this way their most ancient edifices are ruthlessly destroyed. Even their

churches are included. You suddenly come upon a magnificent pulpit, wonderfully carved, centuries old, utterly ruined by being daubed over with thick coatings of common paint. One could almost weep at the desecration.

Nevertheless, the general aspect of the streets is very picturesque, lively, and interesting. Especially on a bright moonlight night. Then the outlines of the houses come out in bold relief; the freshness of their faces is concealed in gloom, weird lights and shadows are thrown in all directions; and you may fancy yourself verily and indeed in a city of the past. Undoubtedly Holland is seen to the best advantage at such times.

To a stranger, a curious and quaint experience is to see the towns so intersected by canals; canals, as it were, in place of streets. The

Saturday Morning in Rotterdam.

whole town of Rotterdam seems one large harbour; for barges, and even vessels of some size thread these canals, and the scene becomes an assemblage of trees, houses, masts, and water. Many a young couple marry with no other stock-in-trade, no other worldly goods, than a small barge furnished with various kinds of articles, which they sell by the canal-side. We might call them floating gipsies, for they do by water exactly what our own gipsies do by land. So they go through Holland, backwards and forwards, and round about, leading a free, merry, jovial kind of life, doing harm to no man, and often laying up in a stocking-foot a goodly number of golden guldens against the time to come, the time when the young birds in this watery nest will want to fly away on their own account on some fine St. Valentine's day; and the old ones will need to take it somewhat more easily as the burden of life and age grows heavier.

Canals intersecting the town so constantly, communication has to be kept up by means of drawbridges; some of which are ingeniously contrived, and others are somewhat clumsily constructed with great beams of wood suspended overhead, to which chains are attached. When a barge is ready to go through, the chains pull the beams into a perpendicular position, and up goes the bridge. The toll-keeper swings a long rod over the side, to which is attached a long piece of string and a small leather cup at the end. The man or woman in the barge puts the money into the cup (I think the sum of fourpence clears so many bridges), it is swung up again, the barge passes through, the bridge is let down, and the accumulated crowd rushes onwards. The barges are most of them painted in very brilliant colours, and add to the liveliness of the scene. But they are not as picturesque as many of our Thames barges. They, wending their way up our noble river, with their red sails set, are the prettiest and most artistic objects, of their kind, to be easily met with.

We were astonished that first morning in Rotterdam, to find how the dogs are made to work in Holland. Singly, or in pairs, they are harnessed to milk carts, vegetable carts, carts of all sorts, and compelled to drag them through endless streets. They appeared to work almost as hard as donkeys do in England. Their aspect was frequently woebegone in the extreme. Many of them seemed to have lost the power of holding up their heads, which hung languidly between the shafts of their vehicles. At night I saw some of them unharnessed; and, too tired to shake themselves, they crept to their well-earned rest.

"Ah, sir," said the old guide, when I remonstrated at a custom that seemed so inhuman, "you are quite right. The women and the dogs are the hardest workers in Holland." I wondered what the Society—as a certain Mrs. Malaprop of my acquaintance once remarked—for the *promotion* of cruelty to animals would say to this in England.

Walking through the streets, we suddenly came upon an announcement over a cellar door. "Hier mangeld men." It caught A.'s eye, and he turned pale. "Hier mangeld men!" he repeated. "Surely that means, 'Here they mangle men!'—what *does* it mean?" he continued, turning to the guide. "Have we got amongst savages? or an inquisition?"

"Nothing so terrible," laughed the guide. "It simply means, 'Mangling done here.' You will find the announcement all over the town. Mangling is a very popular business in Rotterdam." For my own part, I wondered whether, if we dived into any of these underground retreats, we should find a Mr. Mantalini turning the handle.

Immediately opposite this announcement we alighted upon another: "Melk te koop."

"Ah," said A., "I am improving in my Dutch. I see at a glance what that means. "Milk from the cow."

"Wrong again, sir," laughed the old guide. "It means 'Milk to sell.'"

"Indeed!" returned A. "Then I am a customer." He darted into the doorway, and a fresh, good-looking woman came forward. He made her understand that he wanted a glass of milk; then a second; then a third; until, alarmed, I stopped a further supply.

"Never tasted such milk," said A. "Should like to go on drinking until to-morrow morning."

The woman stood, her arms akimbo, the picture of astonished admiration at an Englishman's capacity for drinking milk. Meanwhile I was admiring her brass and copper pails and pans. They were perfect treasures, such as we never see in England; so bright and clean that they reflected everything around them. These brass pails and pans are quite one of the features of Holland. You see them everywhere. In all farm-houses, small and large; at all dairies; perambulating the streets in carts. They excited A.'s artistic enthusiasm to the last degree. In fact, more than with all else in Holland he fell in love with their brooms and water-pails. It was with difficulty I dissuaded him from buying a dozen of each, and bringing them home as a present to the domestic portion of his establishment.

Soon after this, issuing on to the market-place, we stood on the bridge in front of the statue of Erasmus: a piece of ancient bronze workmanship full of grace and beauty. Erasmus was born at Rotterdam in the year 1467. The house is still shown to visitors, and is distinguished by a small figure of the sage placed over the doorway. Some years ago it had been converted into a public-house; but it now flourishes as a mart for a greengrocer's wares. Erasmus died at Bâle in 1536.

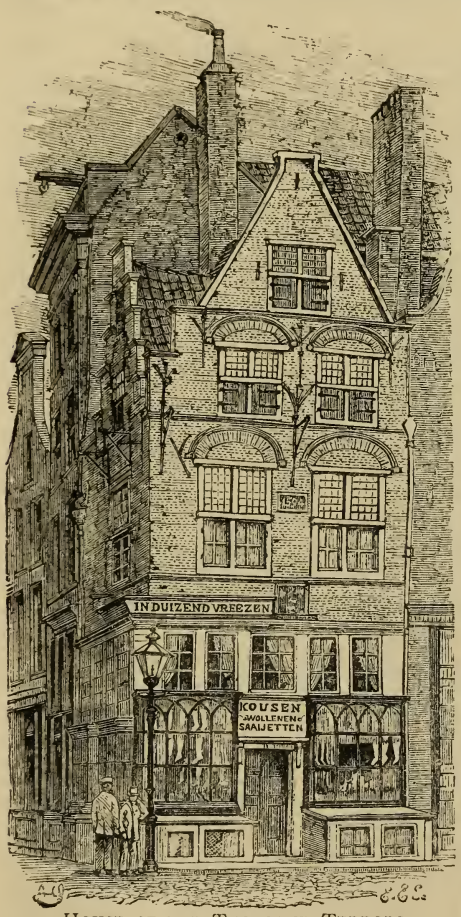
Facing the statue in the market-place is an old corner house, handed down to posterity as the *House of the thousand terrors*. In 1572, when the Spanish by stratagem entered the town and so treacherously murdered and massacred its inhabitants, a thousand of the people took refuge in this house. They put up the shutters and barred the entrance, and killing a kid let the blood run out under the doorway. The Spaniards, seeing the red stream, concluded that the inmates had already been despatched, and passed by. Thus they were saved; and no doubt the title of the house by no means exaggerated the sensations of the people it contained. It is certain they must have been packed closer than herrings in a barrel.

Near the market-place is the church; a Gothic edifice, large but not beautiful, built in the 15th century, and since then more than once restored. The view from its lofty tower is extensive; and the town, as you look down upon a multitude of red-tiled roofs, appears more ancient from this point of view than from any other. The organ is one of the finest in the world.

Rotterdam is not rich in monuments of any sort, or in art treasures.

Its picture-gallery was destroyed by fire in 1864, and the one it now possesses is the least valuable and interesting we inspected in Holland. It is scarcely worth a visit. The town has about 125,000 inhabitants, one fifth of whom are Roman Catholics, and a smaller proportion Jews.

It was fair time in Rotterdam, and country women and men from all parts were flocking to it. Their costume was often quaint, their head and ear ornaments extraordinary. Many of them beneath a lace or net cap wore a gold or silver shield, completely covering the head like an outer skull. Not a particle of hair was visible. The effect was unsightly: so much so that the younger women are rebelling against the custom, and wisely refuse to conceal so great a portion of their beauty. In a few years' time these ornaments will almost have disappeared. The women looked infinitely worse where, as in some cases, they endeavoured to effect a compromise, and upon their gold skulls and caps had perched a new-fashioned hat or bonnet, all flowers, feathers, and flying streamers. Nothing could look more ridiculously out of place. Their own national costume gives them a picturesque aspect and distinctive character, even where the ornaments possess no particular beauty. But when new fashions are introduced upon them, the women become as irritating as the aspect of the houses; they are neither one thing nor the other. Some of them, thus bedizened, with their horns sticking out, looked very much as a cow would look, if decked out in a bonnet: certainly as ungraceful.



House of the Thousand Terrors.

These horns! Standing out two or three inches on either side the eyes, some of the women wore long ornaments of twisted gold,

twisted round and round like a corkscrew, and forming a sort of cage; the rings expanding towards the middle, and coming to a point. These must be formidable weapons to a young Dutchman, should he endeavour to snatch a salute from a fair, but unwilling, maiden. Others wore ornaments exactly like shutters, so that on retiring you might fancy they had nothing to do but fold them over the eyes, and bid the world good-night. Their earrings were often amazingly long and heavy; almost painful to look at. All these ornaments are of pure gold or silver, and are heirlooms, descending from mother to daughter, and counting back generations.

The Dutch are very thrifty. None of them seem poor; all are well-to-do. Their practice is to get all they can, and spend as little as possible. The better class have the reputation of being as honest and straightforward as the day: no doubt they are so. But let the traveller beware of guides, porters, cabmen, and the poorer shopkeepers. It is needless to caution the most untravelled against the old curiosity dealers. All these people play into each other's hands. They extort to the very utmost. Englishmen and Americans, say they, are so rich they will pay anything. And it is to be feared we now have this reputation abroad to a very considerable extent.

The cleanliness of the Dutch has passed into a proverb. Not satisfied with periodical paintings and white-washings, they constantly cleanse the outsides of their houses with machines that somewhat resemble our fire-engine hose. Streets, pavements, gutters, pedestrians, all come in for a share of this watery mania. However, if it be a good quality carried to excess, it is a good one still. Better this than the opposite: as many a traveller going through—Hungary, for instance—has found to his cost. Luckily we shall not find it to ours, throughout Holland, as the reader will discover, whether it be in the old capital of Amsterdam, or a dead city on the banks of the Zuyder Zee.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

THE PARTING HOUR.

How shall I live through all the years
That must pass ere we two meet again?
How shall I hide from the world my tears,
Or mask, with laughter, this bitter pain?

How shall I teach my lips to smile,
That are warm and red with your kisses yet?
Is there a balm for this heart-ache wild?
Must I remember, who should forget?

Ah! if time bringeth us only peace,
He hath done full well—we ask no more—
And well for us that this hour's woe
E'en Time, himself, can ne'er restore!

A NIGHT OF DANGER.

RIDING hard and fast, almost as for dear life, along the wilds of the vast and lone American prairie, I found myself, to my intense astonishment, entering upon a straggling settlement, and pulled up to reconnoitre and consider. That I had missed my way was all too plain: for, on the course that I ought to have come, there was not a cabin or a single settler. Somewhere or other I had got out of the right track and into the wrong one.

Almost any traveller in the border sections would have been rejoiced to thus stumble unexpectedly upon a place where food and shelter might be obtained. At another time I should have been so myself. Not now. In the breast-pocket of my closely-buttoned coat I carried five thousand four hundred and ninety odd dollars, United States money. It was during our time of war. This money had been given into my charge to carry it without stopping, and by the most unfrequented route, to Fort L——, and place it in the hands of Colonel Southard; who was waiting for it.

"Get through at your best speed," said the Major-General to me, when I was on the point of starting. "The money has been long due, and Colonel Southard is showing some irascible temper over it. Should you scent danger en route, ride in a careless manner, as though you had nothing about you. Be very cautious."

"Is it known that this money is going to him?" I asked.

"It is not generally known. Some few, of course, inevitably know it—the mail agent and a clerk or two. Still, I don't see that we need fear treachery from them: I think you will be all safe."

But here I was, having lost my route, and not knowing whether I was safe or not—at least, whether the money would be. And, now that I had blundered on to the verge of this scanty settlement, what must be my best course? Should I halt for refreshment, as any ordinary traveller would; or should I ride straight through without stopping?

The latter course might of itself excite suspicion. So, pushing on to the house of entertainment with the most careless air I could assume, I got off my horse. If treachery had been at work, I was no doubt being watched for, on this route as on others, and should need all my cunning to escape—if escape were indeed possible. There were only two men in the bar-room when I entered; the landlord and the ostler. I ordered supper, and sat down.

Two travellers next rode up, and ordered drinks. One of them went with the ostler, the other threw himself down on a bench outside and began filling a huge pipe. Strolling carelessly about the room, I managed to glance from the window. My heart leaped into my throat, for in the man seated there I recognized Bill Wolf: one of the

most desperate characters that ever figured in the annals of border ruffianism. Yes, it was certainly he, and no other. There was the huge red moustache, the thick, hairy throat, and the shoulders hunched up around his head, suggesting the shape of a mammoth clam—and there was the voice with a deep-down intonation, like the plop, plop, plop of water hurriedly leaving a jug.

I sat down again and went through the form of eating my supper: but whatever appetite I might have felt, on my entrance into the inn, had vanished now. The discovery that this dangerous man, Bill Wolf, was at my elbow, filled me with suspicion and dire apprehension. His being there *might* be all chance; but—I did not believe it to be.

Presently the men came in together, and ordered supper. Mine was finished, and now was my chance to leave.

Paying my score, and saying a general good evening, I crossed the dim smoky bar-room. They took no notice of me whatever, not even returning my good night: only the landlord looked furtively after me. My spirits rose: I hoped my fears had misled me, and that I should get safe away.

It was quite duskish outside, but the ostler was flitting about the stable with his lantern, which emitted but a little more effulgent light than a white bean would have done; he brought out my steed, and I trotted away. The moon—a little past the full—would soon rise; and I pushed along at a smart trot, so as to get well out upon the plains and into the right trail before that time. I was feeling infinitely relieved at my providential escape from contact with the desperate characters whom I had left at the settlement, when my acute, trained, ever alert ears detected the sound of swift riding. In which direction? From behind me? Yes, for the mildly-floating breeze blew from that quarter. The face of the prairie in this section was a little rolling, but not so as to afford any shelter, and not a shrub or bush dotted the expanse for miles.

I drew up my horse one moment to listen. On, they came. No chance travellers ever rode like that. It meant *pursuit.*

I gave my steed a lash and he broke into a convulsive gait, hove his body up with one or two plunges, stumbled, going down from his knees to his nose, and pitched me literally heels over head. For an instant I was paralyzed with astonishment, wondering what could have taken my trusty and good horse; the next, I seized the bit to fetch up the fallen animal, for there was no time to lose.

But what was the matter with the horse? He had a white spot on his face, and this white seemed to come off on my hand as I touched him. A wet, slimy, sticky substance, bearing a remarkable resemblance to whitewash. With my heart in my mouth I stooped to feel his white legs and feet. Yes, they were whitewashed too. The trappings had been taken off my own horse at the inn, and transferred to this worthless animal, which had been whitewashed over to imitate mine.

This discovery brought an appalling interpretation of the oncoming horsemen. I gave the horse the whip as soon as his unstable legs were well under him, and sent him scouring on ahead; while I ran off on foot to the right, making for a little hollow that I discerned in the distance. It proved to be a shallow, dry ravine: and here, to my profound astonishment, I discovered a low cabin, or hut, about the dimensions of an ordinary country log-house. Dashing up to this, for it was my only hope of shelter, I gave a rapid succession of knocks. A shrinking, pale, and cowering woman opened the door.

"What is it?" was her first question, noticing my breathless haste.

Had I taken a moment's reflection, I might not have given the true explanation as I pushed in by her. In all probability this secret hut belonged to my enemies. The moon was coming up dry and red in the east.

"Is there any chance to hide here? My horse has thrown me, and I believe a party of desperadoes are close up with me."

She mechanically closed the door behind me, before I had finished my explanation. "No, no; there is no place," she gasped, her ear catching the sound of the coming horsemen. "This is all there is; this one room."

My eyes had been seeking for a piece of furniture, or else, that I might lie concealed in—all in vain. Suddenly they rested on a dark object in the far corner.

"But this?—what's this?" I exclaimed, making a rush for it.

"It's a coffin," was her quick response. "But there's no other chance—they are turning up to the door. Get in."

I had barely time to place myself in this receptacle for the dead, when a hoarse voice that I had now too good cause to know, that of Bill Wolf, was heard outside. His heavy whip struck the door.

"Here, you Dick!—Is Dick here?"

The woman threw her apron over her head and opened the door.

"Where's Dick?"

"He has not come back yet!" returned the woman.

"Oh, not yet! Jenny, have ye heard a horse go by yonder?"

"Yes, just but now. I looked out, thinking one of ye might be coming. Seemed to have a small man on it."

"Driving on like the devil—eh?"

"Going fast," she answered. "You might perhaps hear its tracks still," she added, passing out and pulling the door to. "Listen!"

But Bill Wolf must have been of a suspicious nature. I heard him leap from his horse. For the life of me I could not help pushing up the coffin lid by a hair's breadth, and looking through the chink. A fire was burning on the stone hearth. Bill Wolf had a hand on each door-post. His brutal head was thrust inside the room, peering about.

"What's that?" he questioned. And my heart stood still, for I knew he spoke of my retreat.

"It is Staffer's coffin," she answered. "Blue Rex left it here for Dick to take over to-night."

"Stuff!" ejaculated Wolf, contemptuously. "A coffin for the likes of him! As Staffer made his own bed, so let him lie on it."

"The boys wish it," said she, "and Dick promised."

"Dick be shot! He ought to be here. Are you sure he is not in? You've not got him in hiding anywhere?"

Wolf, all suspicion, went up to the rain barrel, and I heard him shake it. I suppose he thought "Dick" might have taken refuge in the water: then he came to the door and looked in again. Satisfied, he turned away, and mounted his horse.

"Are you in pursuit of the man gone by?" asked the woman in a timid, careless tone.

"Ay. But what's it to you if we are? He can't have gone far, either, on that animal."

Riding away in search of *me* and of what I carried, Wolf clattered off. The woman watched him join two comrades, who had waited at a little distance; then she came in, and barred the door. I was out of the coffin in a trice.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" gasped the woman. "They will be back in twenty minutes; for I believe that your horse is yet in sight; and my husband is also liable to come at any moment."

"Your husband might perhaps shelter me. He——"

"*Him!*" she emphasized it in despairing tones. "He is Bill Wolf's brother. I suppose you have managed to affront some of them. And they give no quarter."

I looked around in despair. To go out, was to meet this Dick: to stay in, meant discovery, probably death. The coffin was no longer available, for Dick was coming for it.

"It is death for you, anyway," she moaned. "I hear the rattle of Dick's axle-wheels already."

"Stay, there's the rain barrel outside," said I, in desperation. "They've tried that once, they may not look in it again."

And before you would be able to speak a sentence, the water was dashed out of the cask, stealing down into the arid soil, and I was in the barrel, and the woman dropping a tub half filled with water in at the top as a cover.

She had barely time to re-enter the house, the door of which fortunately opened on the side away from the moon, when a rattling vehicle drew up at the door, and I heard a hoarse voice raving and swearing at the woman for something done, or undone; and then from the bunghole, the plug having been dislodged in the upsetting of the cask, I saw the furious return of the three other renegades. Hearing Dick's wheels they must have turned back. As to the steed they supposed I was on, they knew they could catch that up at any time, whatever the delay.

There ensued a good deal of loud talking, explanations, and oaths.

A jorum of hot nectar was prepared, and they all went in to partake of it. Dick refused to join in the hunt after me, on account of having to take the coffin to its destination.

"Anyway, we are bound on the same track," cried Wolf, "so you may have the pleasure of seeing us wing the turkey. Five or six thousand dollars! It's a prize we don't get the chance of every day."

"Won't old Southard swear, when he finds the money doesn't reach him, and he doesn't know why!"

A shouting laugh. Dick's voice was heard as it died away.

"Is there water enough out there, Jenny, to drink my horse?"

"I'll see," she returned, moving slowly over the door-sill. And then, leaping to the cask, she lifted out the tub and tipped my barrel over a little, so that I could spring out.

"Hide where you best can," she whispered.

The best place, the only place, seemed to be the dark corner between the cabin wall and the barrel. Dick came out, and led his horse up to the tub to drink. Then, turning the waggon endways, he went indoors, brought out the coffin with the help of one of the others, and slid it into the vehicle. Bill Wolf came out next.

"I've made another jug of nectar," called out the woman. And at the tempting words they all went back to the cabin. I believe the woman did it to give me time.

At that moment a wild and desperate plan entered my brain; but, feeling for my knife, I found that it was missing, along with the belt to which it was attached. In the sudden jostle which the falling steed had given me, the girdle had been snapped and lost without my knowledge. The horses of the three renegades—my own, which had been retained by the ostler at the inn, among them—were hitched on the farther side of the door, where the moonlight, striking by the end of the cabin, rested fully upon them. It was suicide to attempt seizing one of them—my own, as I had hoped to do—and riding off; so I embraced the only alternative. Creeping into the waggon, I lifted the coffin lid, and again lay down in the long, narrow prison.

There was no choice. The flood of moonlight had swept so far towards my hiding place that only a part of my body was concealed by the barrel, and I knew that discovery was inevitable, for the man's horse stood in such a position that, in order to recover the reins, he must have trodden upon me; and there was no earthly thing, as far as the eye could reach over the plain, behind which a man could hide. Ah, but what if he should re-adjust his freight? Can you think how my heart beat away at the thought? You wonder what my plan could be? I had none: other than the hope of having only one man to deal with, if Dick parted with the rest and went on alone. He had said he would go with them as far as the "Forks;" after which, as I comprehended, his way would lie one road and theirs another.

The three others mounted, and all were about to start, when the woman ran out with some sort of a blanket, and muttered something

about covering the coffin. Dick yelled out to her to mind her business and let the thing alone.

But she succeeded in accomplishing her purpose. Disposing the blanket across the coffin, as he was beginning to drive away, she contrived to lift its lid and drop inside a bowie-knife. You may be sure I seized it heartily, and gave her a blessing, too, poor thing: and the first use I made of it was to lodge the lid up just a fraction. So that my breathing was easy, though my position was cramped.

"We'll beat up the game speedily now," said the horsemen one to another, the quantity of whisky they had imbibed, in the shape of "nectar," somewhat impeding their utterance. "He can't by any miracle have got yet into the wooded belt by Burford Springs."

"Horse couldn't take him there."

"Dick," they called back, as they were riding on; "a cool twelve hundred apiece! Throw out your old shell and join the hunt."

The driver mumbled some foreign answer, as if the nectar were clouding his understanding, and whipped up his horse. If he did attempt to move the coffin, I was lost.

They kept within hailing distance for the length of some three or more miles, Dick smashing the heavy waggon along at a steaming pace; and I expected that the coffin would be jostled out.

By-and-bye, there was a sudden shout; a loud "tally-ho," as if the huntsmen had sighted the quarry. It came from the right. Nothing but an unwarrantable amount of liquor could have influenced them to conduct themselves as they did and to make this noise. The probability was that not a soul (save the one they fancied they were pursuing) was within miles and miles, but men bound on these raids are cautious. No sooner was the noise heard, than my driver came to a halt. Listening for a moment, he threw the reins across the horse, leaped down, and started off towards his friends. Perhaps the temptation of the money (that they might be then dividing) was too much for him.

For one instant my heart stopped beating at thought of the hazard which I was about to run. The next moment I sprang from the coffin to the ground. A few lightning-like strokes, and I had severed the traces and the rude bands of the harness.

The whole scene is vividly pictured in my mind now. The moonlighted prairie, the sloping ravine towards which the renegades had been dashing, and the waggon standing in the trail. I mounted one of the horses and urged him onwards. All might have been well, had not the quick ears of the men caught the echo of his footsteps. Looking round, they saw me making off—and I think must have known me, for I was lighted up by the bright moonlight. With a wild shout, they came on in pursuit. There was the sharp report of two rifles. I felt a sting in my foot, another in my shoulder; but the horse was unharmed, and the race for life began.

There was one disheartening disadvantage for me: I had no saddle;

but I was riding for my life, and I held my steed between my knees, and took the broad trail with the fury of a tornado. The issue would rest chiefly with the horses. I knew nothing of the one which I rode; I knew nothing of those that were pursuing me, excepting my own white-faced horse. He could run like an antelope, and out-wind a hurricane.

On, and on, and on, my steed, desperately spurred with the point of the knife, bore ahead, actually causing me to gasp for breath; and not two hundred yards in the rear rode those would-be assassins.

On the rolling prairie now; and my animal took the declivities with a plunge, and the elevations with a sure, fierce stride. Across the brawling ford now—but crack came another rifle echo, and again a stream of fire seemed to strike my shoulder. They were closing in—closing up. I could now make out only two horsemen following. One of these had discharged his rifle at me; the other I supposed was keeping his in reserve until he should be a few yards nearer. I knew not where I was, how far I had come, or how far I had to go; but I did think and hope I must be nearing civilization and Colonel Southard's camp.

Could I keep up this pace? Would the horse fail me? Away and away went we: I in front, they behind.

A momentary dizziness threw me forward on my horse's neck. Whether I should have yielded to the faintness, I know not; but a distant sound struck on my ear, and brought me up. Oh, it was good, that sound!—but I was not quite sure yet. I broke into the wild, long, fierce yell of the border rangers, and sped on again; but my horse had that peculiar twist now and then in his gait that told me he was faltering.

Again that echo reached me, swelling out on the rising wind, and my heart leaped up. It was the shrill music of the fife, and the rumble of the drums of the infantry; who were probably returning to camp from some expedition to Fort L——. Again I sent out that long, wild, border cry, and I knew by the quicker breathing of the fife, and the rapid pulsing of the drum, that the soldiers had heard, and were coming to my rescue.

A parting shot fired at random, and my two pursuers turned: they could not face the soldiers. But one of them, at least, was not done with. I called my horse with a peculiar whistle that he knew. I repeated and repeated it; and then I heard him come crashing again in pursuit, while his rider shouted and lashed him, and tried to pull him round the other way. For a brief space of time, Wolf, for he it was, wrestled with the animal, lashed, goaded, and roared at him; but my incessant, jerky whistle-call kept his mind and head towards me. Wolf only gave up the fruitless struggle and leaped from his back, when a squad of infantry dashed over a billowy swell of the prairie.

"It is Wolf," I panted, as they bore down. "Go in pursuit of him: I am all right now."

No need to urge them. A price was set on Wolf's head, as they knew, for he was the most dangerous and desperate outlaw of the time. I just saw some of them fly off—while the plain seemed to be rising and falling about me, and then quietly fainted; partly with fatigue and excitement, chiefly with loss of blood.

And when my eyes opened again, they fell on Mr. Wolf—a prisoner. Our men had brought him in to receive his deserts. As for myself, I was saved, and the money also.

"It was a near touch, captain," observed one of the men to me, "and I should not have liked the coffin at all."

But it was the coffin that saved my life.

WELCOME.

Be glad to-day! a stranger waits—Old Time has brought him hither;
He stands already in our gates, and goes we know not whither.
With songs of jubilation we celebrate the meeting;
Come, give him salutation, a warm and honest greeting.

Join heart and hand,
Throughout the land
United be the chorus,
To welcome here
The promised Year—
The Year that lies before us.

What tho' his voice be harsh and rough—we would not see him banished,
He'll learn to whisper soft enough when wintry clouds have vanished.
Full well we know the treasure his coat of mail is hiding,
And hail the Year with pleasure, in Providence confiding.

As through time past,
While earth shall last,
The gifts of God bestowing,
Sunshine and rain
Shall come again,
And reaping after sowing.

No welcome weak our fathers gave his ancestors immortal;
No cold reception does he crave whose foot is at our portal.
Turn o'er the blotted pages that tell how we have striven,
For unto all the ages another Year is given;

And this fair scroll—
Shall it enrol
Nothing but vain endeavour?
Not so, brave heart,
Bear well your part,
The record stands for ever.

SYDNEY GREY.

KATARINA ORSINI.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

IT was a sunny day, in sunny Italy. A picturesque dwelling, half palace, half villa, three parts ruin, rose in the midst of extensive grounds. Pleasure grounds once, and luxuriantly beautiful; but now, like the house, run to waste. The hand of time had left on all its defacing marks, and the owners were not rich enough to arrest effectually its ravages. A small space just around the house was kept in order: a few of the rooms were retained as habitable.

Those rooms and the cultivated portion of the garden displayed a luxury that untravelled people in our own land have never seen or dreamt of; all else told of utter neglect, of extreme poverty. One room, it was the state saloon, large and lofty, and opening on a white marble colonnade, was shaped as an octagon. Gilded mirrors, a mosaic floor, chaste statues of alabaster, carvings of ivory, inlaid tables, ottomans and foot-mats of rich and costly velvet, delicate vases holding flowers, and a few exquisite pictures, caught the eye and pleased the taste. Without, below this white marble colonnade, the rich green foliage of the trees blended with brilliant-hued flowers. Shady green banks afforded a grateful shelter; life-like statues were again seen here, carved from the marbles of Pentelicus; while the spray of a fountain, falling into its basin with a rippling murmur, whispered of delicious coolness in the noonday heat. A stranger, walking about the streets of the Eternal City, in its dirty narrow bye-ways, and gazing up at its dull palaces, some of them ugly-looking enough, all their windows closely shut against the light and the sun, might scarcely have said she could own so enchanting a spot. For this half-ruined villa-palace, enclosed within its own walls, was not situated in Rome's most favoured part.

Sitting on the white steps that led down to the fountain, listlessly dropping rose-leaves, one by one, into its glistening waters, was a lovely young girl of eighteen. Her features were pale and faultless, her dark brown eyes shone with a gentle light, her hair was soft as silken threads. There she sat, casting in the rose-leaves to the little fish, humming scraps of songs under her breath, talking to some gay birds that hung aloft in a gilded cage, and wondering lazily where Maria was. Thus amusing herself, she sat on until the sun went down.

"Katarina," called out a voice from the house, speaking the soft name gently, "the hours are advancing: come in."

"It is pleasant here, mother mine," answered the girl.

"Child, come in, I say. The evening miasma will be rising."

"Nay, but it does not penetrate here," returned Katarina.

"It does, Katarina. It was nothing but that fatal malaria which destroyed my sister. *She* sat out in it, as you think you may sit. Its breath struck her down, and ere the week's end they were chanting over her the requiem for the dead. Child, linger not."

Katarina obeyed, smiling: the young are ever carelessly sanguine. In the state saloon her mother sat, engaged in some light lace work; her sister listlessly stood by one of the alabaster pillars. Maria was by a year the senior of the two girls, but she looked older than her age: maidens ripen fast under a generous sun. Her style of beauty was rare, for her face was of dazzling fairness, her hair like threads of fine gold, and her eyes were blue as are Italia's skies. Of lofty and graceful form, admiration followed her wherever she appeared, and the fame of Maria Orsini's beauty was already rife in the high coteries of Rome. The younger one, Katarina, slight and small of stature, of manners retiring, of bearing gentle, attracted less notice.

They were the children of the Count and Countess Orsini. It was a remote branch of the great Orsini family: an *obscure* branch, as compared with those high and mighty people. The Count and Countess Orsini possessed all the pride and pretension of their race: and possessed it the more, perhaps, from the consciousness of the fact that they were in a degree looked down upon by their distant and higher-positioned relatives. The count was poor, the count moreover was an ungenial-mannered man, the count was inclined to be quarrelsome. The countess, of weakly health, of retiring tastes, would never willingly have quitted her home: and so, what with his unpopularity and her dislike to society, they had fallen very much out of the world.

But this had to be changed when their two beautiful daughters came home from the convent where they had been educated. The only son, heir to the dilapidated estates, was just now away. It was necessary, in the fulfilment of the obligations pertaining to their state and rank, that Maria and Katarina Orsini should enter into society: therefore the countess had to break through the shell of her home retirement, and appear in the great world. And with two daughters so attractive to introduce to it, it need not be said that the world welcomed her. But some months had elapsed now since the young ladies' introduction, and the chief aim and end that was expected to come of it had not been achieved by either: a desirable marriage. A rather considerable sum of money had been set aside as their portions, and the two young ladies were heiresses in a moderate way: but their father had distinctly told each of them that unless she made a suitable marriage, one that would satisfy his ambition, not a stiver of it should she inherit. It was in his power to bestow it as he would. If his daughters failed to make a suitable match, they would be re-consigned to their convent home, there to take the veil.

Launched into the gaieties of the Romish city, the girls had

already become fond of its attractions, Maria especially so. Her beauty was something new and rare, and the adulation it brought was all too welcome to Maria Orsini. Two suitors had come forward for her favour: but the one was not deemed wealthy enough, and the other not of sufficiently good descent to aspire to the hand of an Orsini. Maria was every whit as proud as her father, cold and ambitious.

There was a réunion this night at the Capella Palace. The Princess di Capella, of high rank and in high favour at the Court of the Vatican, was holding another fête in honour of her son. He, the Prince di Capella, had been travelling for two years in France and in the north, as the Italians style our land; and now that he had returned, his mother hoped he would settle down and take unto himself a wife. She was giving a succession of entertainments on a princely scale in his honour: this was the fourth. And yet, she could scarcely afford the cost; for the Capellas, like the Orsinis, were not rich. The Orsinis had been bidden to the first. It had not been the princess's intention to invite them to the rest, but the young prince had insisted. He had been struck, fascinated, with the beauty of Maria. The proud Princess di Capella assented petulantly, observing that they did but serve to crowd her reception rooms: she deemed that she condescended greatly to that inferior branch of the Orsinis.

Conspicuous in beauty, in stature, in grace, stood Maria Orsini amidst the gay and courtly throng. The Prince di Capella seemed to think so, for he hovered by her side perpetually. *He* could not boast of beauty: an undersized man with a weazened insignificant face, and an obstinate head adorned with straight black hair. What mattered that? The high-born Prince di Capella, for whose favour every mother in the Eternal City was running a race, hoping to call him son-in-law, for whose notice nearly every daughter was longing, needed not the additional charm of personal attractions.

On this evening, whilst Maria was treading a measure hand in hand with the prince, Katarina stood on the enclosed terrace amidst the orange trees. One, whom she had hoped to see in the gay throng, was not visible. Her heart was beating, her spirit sinking, when he stole up to her—a tall, fair, handsome man, with an attractive face, a winning countenance, and honest faith shining forth from his large grey eyes. The rush of colour to her cheeks, and her start of glad surprise, told a tale.

"Giovanni!" she cried, in a soft, tremulous voice. "It is you!"

"Call me plain John," he answered in English; his whole face lighted up with a smile, as he touched her gloved hand.

"I thought you had not come," she said, changing her language to his: which she spoke well.

"I was detained, writing letters. Katarina, the plot is thickening," he gaily added in a jesting tone. "I shall not be able to stay here much longer: I am wanted at home."

"But you will return, Giovanni!" she whispered, with hesitation.

"Certainly; and to set up my tent in Italy for good: for a part of the year, that is. If I may be allowed. And I must put the question at rest, my Katarina, before starting."

Her eyes fell beneath the ardent gaze of his. Side by side they wandered further down the terrace, where the lights were paler, the orange trees thicker; and there he talked to her of his plans, which looked so full of hope, for love gave to them its own rosy colouring.

John St. Arno was the younger son of a good family. Originally Italian, the St. Arnos had some centuries ago settled in England; the first of them having been created a knight-banneret on the field of battle during the Wars of the Roses. You might see their names now on the list of England's baronets. John, travelling about for pleasure, had seen Katarina at the very first entertainment she went to. He was charmed with the sweet young girl, so unsophisticated and fresh from her convent life, and obtained an introduction to her mother. Since then, he and Katarina had considerably improved their acquaintanceship; the one being as little loth to do it as the other; and a tacit engagement now existed between them.

John St. Arno had a competence: but the family estates had devolved with the title upon his elder brother—who was the very opposite of good and attractive John, and not over well-conducted: spent his days on racecourses and his nights in gambling houses. Maria, who, with all her coldness, her pride, and her ambition, was attached to her sister, had sounded her mother upon the feasibilities of Katarina's hopes. The countess, liking John St. Arno much, opined that the count would make no objection to him, provided he would undertake to have a house in Rome and spend with Katarina a portion of every year there. This piece of hopeful information Katarina, with many blushes, was disclosing now to him under the shade and scent of the orange trees.

Impulsive, open, and hearty in all he did, John St. Arno hastened to the Countess Orsini on the spur of the moment, and found her on a sofa in one of the more remote of the reception rooms.

Taking a seat by her side, he, for the first time in his life, spoke to her of his love for Katarina, and of the plans they had ventured to form. The countess did not discourage him; but she impressed upon him the fact that the decision rested entirely with her husband.

"I think the count cannot object to me on the score of descent," said John to her. "It is very ancient; and originally, you know, we came from Italy."

"Which must account for your speaking our language as we do," observed the simple-minded countess.

"Not exactly," answered John, laughing. "But our family have always deemed it right to keep up their original tongue. I am not rich," he added, returning to the question, "but—"

"But indeed you will be fairly rich," she interrupted. "Katarina has her fortune, you know. Yours and hers united will be very good.

If she had none, I am sure the count would object to you; for your means are not sufficient to keep up the state he will insist upon for his daughters. I must say I should like you for my son-in-law, Signor St. Arno: but if Katarina had no fortune to add to your own means, you might ask for her in vain."

"That would be very cruel. Hardly, as it seems to me, just."

"All the same, you could not then be allowed to pretend to her. The count's will is no more to be altered than were the laws of the Medes and Persians. You—you will not seek to turn Katarina from her faith?" added the countess, after a pause.

"Certainly not. Rather would I encourage her to be steadfast to it: it is the faith she has been reared in; the faith of her people. Dear lady, our worship may differ in form, but not in aim and end. If each did not lead alike to Heaven, what would become of the numbers that have already died in the one or the other?"

The Princess di Capella came sweeping into the room with a train of followers, and John St. Arno quitted the sofa.

"Where did you manage to hide yourself all the evening, Katarina?" asked Maria when they had returned home and were alone.

"I was—a good deal out on the terrace; the saloons were hot," answered Katarina, somewhat evasively, arousing herself from deep thought. Now that the realization of her dreams appeared almost assured, she trembled with instinctive fear. What if her stern father did not approve? She knew his coldness and his pride. John had whispered to her that he should call to see him on the morrow: Katarina, all in a flutter, had begged him *not* to come; but to let her mother break it to the count first.

"Maria," she said timidly, if—if a suitor appeared for you, should you not consider it more desirable that mamma—who is so indulgent to us—should speak to papa before *he* spoke?"

Maria Orsini opened her haughty blue eyes at the question.

"Why so, Katarina?"

"That he — that papa might not be surprised or shocked into passionate anger. He is sometimes, you know."

"Surprised he might be had he previously no idea that the proposal would be made. But how could such a thing startle him?"

"It might, if the applicant were not rich and great."

"Well then, what would it signify to us if papa did go into one of his passions? Justly so too, I should say."

"But, Maria, suppose—suppose it was some one whom you wished papa to receive well, and to say yes to?"

"I never could or should wish it," haughtily remarked Maria Orsini. "A suitor neither rich nor great! You are dreaming, child."

"They used to say in the convent that your reigning sin was ambition; the good sisters often told you so; and in that you take after the Orsinis. But, if it came about that you really cared for *one*, you might forget your ambition then."

"Never could I care for one for whom it was necessary I should sacrifice my ambition; I could not so far forget what is due to myself. I am Maria Orsini. But, Katarina, why are you saying all this: your voice betrays a tone of meaning."

"If I confess why, perhaps you may ridicule me, Maria. Everybody is not the Prince di Capella."

"Not I, child," laughed Maria; "I never ridicule you. If there be one individual who is dearer to me than all the rest of the world who is first with me always, it is my little sister."

"Nay, not *first*, Maria. Our father and mother must be that."

"Circumstances alter cases," said Maria, in her worldly wisdom. "We have been away from them for many years, seeing them only at intervals; whilst you and I have been together always. But now, what is it you wish to tell me?"

"You know a little about it already, Maria. John St. Arno—"

"Oh," interposed Maria, slightingly, for who was John St. Arno, compared to the high and mighty prince whose attentions to her could not now be mistaken. "I quite forgot all about him, child."

"I—I think he is coming to ask for me, to-morrow."

"He! Well, yes, I know you and he have been talking together; I have caught glimpses of him in the evenings among the crowd; but I have other things to think of, you see now, child. Coming to ask for you! John St. Arno! And you indeed wish it, Katarina?"

"What is there against him?"

"Nothing against himself individually, I suppose; and many a young signorina will envy you your good-looking bridegroom. But he has nothing *but* looks, Katarina mia. He has not any title to give you, not any ancient marble-pillared palace; not much wealth."

"To both of us these things are as nothing."

"Well, well, if you are satisfied. There will have to be a dispensation, I suppose, because of his religion; but papa does not care about those things. Or mamma much, either."

"Will papa object, think you, Maria?"

"I think not. Why should he? As mamma observed when I spoke of it to her, your fortune and his will make up a respectable income; and the St. Arnos have their lineage, and he is a favourite everywhere. Very fair, if you can bring your mind to it."

"Which you could not do," smiled Katarina.

Maria drew up her beautiful head. "I! An Orsini change her name for a St. Arno!"

"I am an Orsini too, Maria."

"Yes, child, but you have not the attributes of one. You are not an Orsini by nature, Katarina; neither is mamma. Only—she has fallen in with papa's ways of thought; and, you know, l'abito e una seconda natura."

Maria threw herself into the romance: and in the morning they talked of it with the countess. She anticipated no objection from

the count, though she could never be sure which way his mind would turn. Katarina besought her to break a hint of it to him; and she, ever compliant, proceeded to the count's apartments at the other side of the house. And anxiously enough watched poor Katarina; but when her mother came forth she wore a smiling face.

"He was a little unwilling at first," she said, "on the score of Mr. St. Arno's moderate income; but I ventured to remind him that it would not be very small when yours was added to it; and so, my dear child, it is all right."

The midday heat had not yet come on; and the two young ladies sat under the shade of the trees near the fountain, their favourite seat, dreamily conversing of Katarina's future. Not a shadow of fear rested on the girl's heart now.

"Will he want you to live half your time in England, I wonder, Katarina?"

"I wonder, will he? Perhaps not quite half, Maria. The four hot months, let us say. I will ask him."

"Hush, child! Hark!"

The sound of wheels had attracted Maria's attention. Katarina ran up the bank, from whence a corner of the approach could be discerned. She was full of curiosity: visitors rarely troubled them so early.

Maria laughed. "It is your Giovanni," she said. "He has lost no time."

"Nay; this sounds like a grand rumbling state coach: Giovanni would not come in one," dissented Katarina. "Wait just an instant."

Almost as she spoke, she came running down again. A grave surprise sat on her face and lips.

"Maria, it is the carriage of the Princess di Capella. What can she want so early? What can she want here at all? It is not often that she condescends to visit us."

A self-satisfied smile parted Maria Orsini's proud lips. She toyed with the spray of orange blossom in the waist of her cool white morning dress, and glanced towards the saloon. But no princess appeared in it. Very soon, however, a serving-man crossed it, and glanced down to where the young ladies sat.

"Jacopo," cried out Katarina in a half whisper, "did not the Princess di Capella come here but a minute ago?"

Yes, the princess had come, Jacopo answered. She had asked for the count, not for the ladies. Jacopo had conducted her to the count's saloon, and was now looking for his mistress to inform her of the visit.

"What can it mean—that she should ask for papa?" cried Katarina. "The princess—you look conscious! Oh, Maria!"

An idea had suddenly flashed over the young girl, bringing with it a kind of dismay. Maria Orsini made no reply, save by the proud self-conscious smile.

"Does she come from the prince?—as his messenger?" breathlessly asked Katarina.

"I think it may be so."

"Oh Maria, you have known him so short a period of time!"

"Quite long enough," significantly returned Maria.

"Well—if you think so, and can like him, I am very glad. But what a position for you!" she added. "Wife of the Prince di Capella! Second to few in Rome! I cannot realize it."

"Why cannot you?"

"And I to be only the wife of plain John St. Arno!" she added, with a merry laugh. "I would not exchange husbands with you, princess. Dear Maria, do not be angry with me: that slipped out unawares."

"Angry! Why should I be? That will not anger me, child. You marry a handsome man but a nobody. I marry rank and become a princess. It is the destiny each would have chosen."

"Very true," murmured Katarina.

"As a man, I think the Capella inferior to most men," calmly went on Maria;" as a prince he looks down upon them. One cannot have everything, Katarina. Non v'e rosa senza spina."

"True," again murmured Katarina. "Has he talked to you of this? Did he tell you last night?"

"Tell me!" echoed Maria, in ridicule of the words, but not of her sister. "We patricians do not manage these matters as do your plebeians, Katarina. He has never opened his princely lips to me on the subject."

"Yet you seem to guess at the errand here of the princess!"

"Because I have seen that his admiration of me is serious. Princes don't act on impulse and 'tell their love,' as your simple English John told his; they proceed in harmony with the rules of polite etiquette. In entering on negotiations for the marriage of the Prince di Capella, it is his mother who would open them: therefore I suspect that may be the object of her visit to papa. I suspect also," added Maria, slightly laughing, "that the two have had a battle this morning, and that she has come forth with an ill grace."

"Battle about what?"

"His conferring the honour of his hand upon me. I am sure she has been *afraid* of it, Katarina. I have read it in her manner."

"Then I wonder she yielded."

"Depend upon it she could not help herself. The prince is not legally under her control; and he is one, if I judge him arightly, who brooks not opposition to his will, even from his mother."

"Maria, I don't believe that you care for him!"

"Not at all. But I shall be the Princess di Capella."

Maria was quite right in her conjectures. The Princess di Capella had come with a formal demand for Maria Orsini's hand for her son; and there had been previously an unpleasant scene of dispute between

them, in which she had tried to turn him in his purpose, and tried in vain. But the princess could not raise so great a scandal in Rome as to suffer him to marry without her consent—and that he deliberately said he would do if she withheld it. So here she had come, unwillingly, haughtily resolved to make the best of a bad bargain.

It had been well that she had never come! It had been well that the Prince di Capella had not set his mind on Maria Orsini! For now was about to be enacted one of those deeds of cruelty, one of those most crying wrongs, that are all but unknown in our own free land. A deed that never could be justifiable in the sight of honest man or of heaven.

The Princess di Capella, casually alluding to her son's revenues, so slender in proportion to his rank, had demanded of the Count Orsini that the whole of the money intended as the portion of the two sisters should be bestowed upon Maria: in short, she made it the condition of her own consent to the match.

Will it be believed that the Count Orsini acquiesced? Acquiesced without a single word of remonstrance? Elated at the proud prospect opening to his elder and favourite daughter—a higher one than even *he*, with all his ambition, had dared seriously to contemplate —what mattered it that, to assure its realization, his youngest child must be sacrificed?

"Only her fortune! that does not sacrifice her!" cries the reader, who may be unfamiliar with the policy obtaining amid some of the high-class Italian families. "Her straightforward English lover will get over the injustice, and take her without her dower."

And John St. Arno would have done it, have taken her gladly, rather than lose her. But he was not allowed to do it, and the injustice involved the sacrifice of herself. Katarina was condemned to a convent for life.

When there may be two, or more, daughters in a family, and the sum allotted as their marriage portions (perhaps not large at best) is bestowed upon one, generally the eldest, to enable her to form a high alliance, the others may not marry. It is assumed that, fortuneless, they could only wed to sink into obscurity, and the family pride cannot permit that. Therefore the veil of a nun is the imperative alternative; and such was the fate allotted to poor Katarina.

But she had an hour or two yet of hope and love spared to her. Even while the Princess di Capella was still with the count, for their interview was a prolonged one, Mr. St. Arno called. Katarina chanced to be alone in the shady seat by the fountain, Maria having strolled into the grotto at the end of the cypress grove; he saw her from the saloon and went out to her. They had at least three minutes together before the countess appeared; and Katarina, yielding to his questions, and blushing rosy love-blushes, whisperingly confessed that her father would make no objection.

Later, when the princess had departed—and she went without condescending to see the countess or even Maria, Mr. St. Arno sought and obtained an audience of the count. It was a very short one indeed: for, when Katarina thought that it could hardly have begun, she heard the Count Orsini's own man conducting Mr. St. Arno to the door.

"He might have come to tell all to me and mamma," thought Katarina.

The time went on to evening. The countess and her daughters were engaged to some festivity; but when the young ladies were about to prepare for it, Katarina was told she was not to go.

"Why and wherefore?" merrily questioned the young girl.

"Your father wishes you to remain with him this evening," was the mother's answer, as she turned her steps away. She knew the poor child's destined fate now: but, Italian mother though she was, she shrank from being the one to impart it. Katarina acquiesced with a conscious smile. She supposed the count was going to talk to her of her future life as John St. Arno's wife, and perhaps lecture her on the score of behaving herself in it.

"Very well, mother mine, then I must remain at home," she cheerfully said. "Maria, dear, let me dress you this evening, instead of Ionie! I will turn you out as befits the promised bride of the heir of all the Capellas."

But how terribly was poor Katarina's happy mood changed ere one short hour had passed! She understood now why she had not been permitted to go forth to the evening's gaity. A young girl destined to immediate seclusion is not allowed to mix in the world's folly. Like a stone statue stood she in the saloon alone, leaning against one of its alabaster pillars, the dread interview with her father over; yes, more like a statue than a living being. Her mother and sister found her there on their return at midnight.

"Katarina, why did you remain up?" cried the mother, sharply.

"Oh my poor Katarina!" breathed Maria, tenderly clasping her sister in her arms. "I am so grieved!—so wounded! Not a bit of enjoyment have I had to-night for thinking of you. Mamma told me all in the carriage as we went along."

"I dared not say a word of remonstrance to my father," panted poor Katarina, hardly able to speak from emotion. "Mother, I can to *you*. Won't you save me from this dreadful fate?"

"Dear child, dear Katarina, there is no help for it!" bewailed the countess, her own heart feeling half broken, for she did love her children. "The princess was haughty and exacting: your father never saw a woman of more determined will. They were the only terms on which she would sue for Maria's hand; and she would scarcely do it even with them."

"Were *I* asked to marry at the sacrifice of my sister, I would trample on the proposals of the one who could bring them to me,"

cried Katarina, with agitation, as she looked at Maria. "*I* would not rise upon another's death."

"Death!" echoed the countess. "You are raving, my poor Katarina."

"Not so, mother. It will be as death," she passionately added. "Nay, death would be more welcome to me now than life at the convent."

"Why, child! You were so happy there!"

"Yes, *as* a child: as a girl who had no experience beyond its ways and its walls. Had you and my father wished me to rest contented there, you should not have removed me from it, mother. You should not have allowed to me the pleasures of the world, or—or—the society of Giovanni St. Arno."

"The world is full of cares, Katarina."

"Not more so for me than for others. Maria may have her share of them, high though her position will be. And, whatever cares might have come to me, my husband would have shared them."

"Cease, cease, Katarina; your language is unbecoming a young maiden," said the countess, fractiously: the trouble, which she was so powerless to remedy, was setting all her nerves ajar. "Husband, forsooth! It were better that Giovanni St. Arno had been at the bottom of the Tiber, rather than sojourning in Rome," she added, in her vexation. "But for him you would not have objected to return to the convent. And why should you object? You know that you were happy in it for many years."

"But mother, dear mother, do you not see how different it is? Then I was a light-hearted, careless girl, a boarder with Maria and the other girls. Now I am to be a nun, immured within it, solitary and alone, to the end."

The countess fidgetted as she stood, but made no reply. There *was* a difference. So stupendous a one that her mind could, perhaps, scarcely realize it.

Maria had sat down and was crying bitterly. Katarina, turning to her on sudden impulse, knelt and clasped her knees.

"Maria, if you will, you can save me. Give up the prince. You know you do not care for him. Other suitors will present themselves to one so beautiful and popular as you; some of them, no doubt, as desirable as he, and who may be so wealthy that my poor little portion will be overlooked by them. Oh, mother mine, urge it upon her! Let her save me!"

"I did think of it at first—I did indeed," sobbed Maria. "But—my mother says it may not be."

"I said it was *impossible* that it could be," corrected the countess, with emphasis. "It is impossible. Maria's intended marriage has been publicly announced—and the contract is being drawn up."

Katarina started. "Publicly announced! Already?"

"Yes. The Prince and Maria were congratulated together this

evening. My poor Katarina, you must make the best of it! There is, alas, no alternative. You will go back to the convent on Monday next to enter upon your noviciate: the sooner you are away from the world now the better."

Katarina gave a startling cry. Maria, her eyes raining tears, bent over her, clasped, and kissed her. She was brimful of sympathy, brimful of pity; but of justice she had none. Though, perhaps, she could not help herself more than could her sister: the system was to blame, not Maria Orsini. Her marriage with the Prince di Capella was decreed, and she knew that it could not be set aside.

Katarina also knew it. Anguish had taken possession of her. She lay in Maria's arms as one bereft of life; she passed the night in all the agonies of hopeless despair. Never again to see John St. Arno! Never again to have any hope, or aim, or part in earthly life! And the world had been looking so bright, so fair!

The following day all the talk in Rome was of the approaching nuptials of the Prince di Capella with Maria Orsini, and of the coming seclusion of Katarina.

"It is the most unholy thing I ever heard of!" cried Mr. St. Arno, standing with his arms folded before Katarina, and speaking with suppressed anger. "You are to be secluded for the rest of your days because your sister must make a grand marriage!"

It was again evening. And the countess and Maria had again gone forth into the gay world. The count was shut up in his remote apartments, as he loved to be, and here was John St. Arno standing with Katarina. Liberal to a degree, as many Englishmen are, he had long ago won the heart of Ionie by his gifts; and the waiting-maid had listened to his pleading prayer this evening and ushered him into the presence of her young lady.

"But only for five minutes, you understand, signor," whispered Ionie. "You would not cause me to lose my place? And, if this were known, I should lose it."

Katarina was on the balcony when he entered; her sad eyes, fixed on the stars shining in the deep blue sky of night, seemed to be asking whether heaven could be, indeed, that place of mercy which she had been taught to believe. Startled by the unexpected appearance of her lover, she cried out, shivered, and burst into a flood of tears. For the first time in his life he dared to put his arm round her, essaying to soothe her grief.

Just a few moments of explanation—he telling of the strangely-cool manner in which the count had received him the previous day, refused to listen to a word of his proposals for Katarina, curtly observing that it was not intended she should marry either him or any other man; she confirming the words, and assuring him that the report of her being about to be consigned to the convent for life was all too true a one.

"But surely you do not consent, Katarina?"

"I have no other choice."

That vexed him. He drew away a step and folded his arms, speaking with sternness. Poor Katarina leaned her head against the side of the balcony, and cried in silence.

"Oh, my dear, this must not be!" he resumed, his love resuming its sway again, compassionating pity redolent in his tender tones. "Do you realize what it will be for you?—a death in life."

"Yes. But there's no help for me in all the world."

"Is there not? Would you not rather be my wife, Katarina?"

She lifted her hands as if the question agonised her. "Why speak of it, Giovanni? It cannot be."

"Do you think the count, although he is your father, has any *right* to consign you to this living tomb? Answer me, my love."

"But he has the power," said poor Katarina.

John coughed. "I must save you from it."

She passed her hand over her eyes and looked at him. He save her! What cruel nonsense it was to say it!

"I will take you away with me to free England, and make you my wife the day we get there," he whispered. "Your future life, instead of being a lost waste, shall be one of usefulness, of sweet happiness."

"Oh, don't, don't, Giovanni! That is only a fable, you know."

"Well, yes; only a fable, of course. Let us see how we could work it out. Just for pastime."

"It will but make the reality more cruel."

"We get away from here, you and I," he continued, paying no attention to her words. "To-morrow evening, let us say; this is Wednesday; or the next evening at farthest. A dear old English friend of mine, who is in Rome and who was as a sister to my mother during her lifetime, will go with us and take care of you. I know I have but to ask her. You have seen her, Katarina: Mrs. Mann."

"But why tell the fable?" sobbed Katarina.

"We will make for Civita Vecchia. Vessels of some kind or other are always to be had there for money. And until then, until we are on the good safe waters and have left Italia's shores behind us, you shall appear to be Mrs. Mann's maid, and wear a peasant's dress. I'll go to the masquerade stores and choose the dress myself, cap and ear-rings and all. We touch at the first safe shore we come to, and hasten on by land to London. On the same day that we arrive there our marriage shall take place, according to the rites of my faith and of yours. Or, should the latter demand preparations or delay, you go to Mrs. Mann's home after you have been to our church with me, until all shall be in readiness. A fable easy of enactment, Katarina."

"But still only a fable, Giovanni."

"Wait a bit. We settle down after our marriage in some charming retreat, and petition your parents for their forgiveness until it is accorded. I am not rich, Katarina; but I have enough for comfort,

and your life shall be bright as one long summer's day. Oh my darling!" he added, drawing her nearer to him, and his voice to her sounded sweeter than any earthly music, "which will be best? This blissful, rational life with me, or to be buried alive in the convent?"

Was she realizing the terrible contrast in her mind? Did the picture he drew of what her future might be with him cause her heart to flutter and her mind to waver? She sobbed softly.

"It could not be, Giovanni. I could never get away, I am sure. And oh, what a dreadful scandal it would make in Rome!"

"And all Rome would say Katarina Orsini has done wisely. You can serve your Master better as a free woman than as a secluded one, my Katarina. Ay, and live more actively for heaven."

"I should be excommunicated," said she, trembling from head to foot.

"There's no such thing known as excommunication over yonder, so you could not be. Excommunication does not hold good in England. My darling, be at rest. Let me save you!"

A tap at the door. Enter Ionie. She had come to say that she had only accorded five minutes to the signor, and at least twenty had elapsed. She had stood all the while upon frightful thorns in the passage, and the signor must certainly go.

"Upon condition that you let me in for five minutes this time to-morrow," said he. "Five minutes really, you know, Ionie. It will be long enough for me to arrange matters for the next evening," he whispered to Katarina. "Keep up your heart till then, my darling!"

All Rome was scandalized. The young Signorina Orsini had mysteriously disappeared. So had John St. Arno. But some three or four days went on before anybody thought to connect the disappearance of the one with that of the other: and then it was discovered that good old Mrs. Mann, with her train of trusty servants, made part of the travelling party. And the programme, sketched out by John so deftly, was luckily carried out, the marriage ending it.

And before eight months had gone by, the Count and Countess Orsini, implacable until then, graciously accorded their forgiveness to the offenders, and the young Princess di Capella added an invitation to them to come and visit her at the Capella Palace. For John St. Arno had succeeded to the family title and estates, through the death of his random brother; and Katarina, no longer to be despised and condemned, was Lady St. Arno.

CAPELLA.

A COMMODIOUS house, standing in its own large and well-cultivated garden ground; beyond its enclosing iron gates and palisades, a turnpike road, on which there was much passing traffic; and beyond that the broad and beautiful sea.

A prosperous house, with no lack of refinement in it, and the feet of healthy, happy, merry children echoing in its passages. All healthy save one little boy, Robert. A fading child, he; a delicate blossom; on whom the wind might not blow too roughly.

Fires blazed and candles were alight one early autumn evening. A whole crowd of little people danced to the quadrilles played by the governess, or romped in corners to tunes of their own. It was Nellie's birthday. Mrs. Earle sat by the fire, looking on: talking with the little guests, restraining by a word or motion the too exuberant spirits of her own children. A fair, fresh, slender little boy, with a soft sad light in his deep grey eyes, came up, and rested his head against the flounces of her silk gown.

"Tired, my Bertie?"

Bertie did not answer; but he put up his hand to feel for the loving clasp of his mother's. Mrs. Earle, bending down, saw how white and wan he looked.

"It has been too much for you, my little boy. Would you like to go to bed?"

"I'd like to go to sleep, mamma." And Mrs. Earle quietly took him out of the room to the nurse.

Presently Mr. Earle, who had been from home that day, came in, and was soon making merry with the little folks, for he dearly loved children. He missed one of them.

"Where's Robert?" he asked of his wife.

"Come and see him," she answered. "I don't like his look at all."

The child lay in his white-curtained cot, fast asleep. One little feverish hand lay outside the counterpane; his wasting cheek, surrounded by waves of light golden hair, pressed the bolster. In the pale young face sat the same wan, tired look that it had worn below.

"Poor Bertie!" breathed Mr. Earle. "We shall not keep him long, I fear."

From that evening the child drooped: drooped more than he had before: and the doctor began to come daily. When he took to his bed entirely, they moved him into a room in the front of the house, as it had a livelier look-out, placing his bed at the window. The weak, suffering child lay there patiently, day after day, looking at the passers-by, and at the beautiful ever-changing sea.

Gradually he began to take notice of a bright star, that might be

seen over the sea just opposite to him when the sun went down. No one but himself knew how he grew to love the star and to watch for it. He liked to think that the star was watching him. The darker the night grew, the brighter grew the star.

"It comes, and it looks at me," he said to his mother. "It seems to come up higher and higher over the sea, as though it wanted to see me better. It is always there. It is as sure as God's love."

"And that is even surer than the stars, Bertie."

"But nothing can ever take that star away, mamma. Can it?"

"Nothing at all, Bertie. The stars are placed in the heavens for signs and for seasons."

"I think it is taking care of me, mamma. It watches me so."

Dozing frequently in the day-time, Bertie was wakeful at night. At the evening hour, when the little tenants of the neighbouring rooms were falling asleep, he was wide-awake and watching. And somehow, what with looking at the star and talking of it, he grew to connect it in his childish mind with God Himself: to believe that it was truly watching over him as God watched; that it was, so-to say, a type and surety of God's presence.

"It has always been there, you know, mamma: you told me it had."

"True, Bertie."

"Then why did I never see it till since I was ill, and lay here?"

"Because you never noticed it before. Your bed-room faced the other way, you know, and the star's place is yonder."

"When shall I get well, and play again with Nellie and the rest?"

Mrs. Earle turned her head with a hasty movement, so that her eyes and the sudden rush of tears to them were hidden from him.

"Perhaps it will be never, mamma?" said the child, anxiously. "When I asked papa this morning, he told me I must be a brave little boy and trust all to God. That God would make me well if He pleased; or else He would take me away to live with Him, and that would be better."

"Much, much better, Bertie," she answered, with a sobbing sigh. "He will take us all when our work here is done and over."

"And I could not play now, I am so tired. I think I am more tired than I was yesterday. Suppose I should get more and more tired always! Shall I?"

"I—hardly know, Bertie," she said, with hesitation. For she could not bear to deliberately mislead even this dying child. He, quick of apprehension, discerned somewhat of the truth.

"Oh, mother! To lie here always! What if God should forget me?"

"God never forgets, my darling. He is sure and faithful."

"As sure as the star?"

"Yes, Bertie, as sure as that."

"And that is always there. It never goes."

But there came an evening when little Robert Earle looked for the star in vain. It was not there; it had gone. How intensely troubled

the child was, how (so to say) terrified, we perhaps could not picture. His intellect and feelings were in advance of his years: and, like the rest of us, who cannot speak of some dread fear that has laid hold of our hearts, Bertie could not speak of this. If the star had deserted its place and him, why, perhaps God could and would desert him.

For a few nights the same state of things continued. There was no star. No star. Other stars were in their places, but that one was not. The nurse noticed that Master Robert was unusually feverish. She told the doctor that she had more than once caught him crying at the dusk hour in his little bed.

"Ay," complacently assented the doctor: "You see he gets weaker."

One evening, when he was temporarily left alone, Mrs. Earle found him in a state of excitement. He had partly raised himself in bed; his hands were stretched out as if in welcome; his gaze was strained on the sky. The beautiful star was in its place again, shining in the deep-blue canopy of night.

"Oh mother, mother, it is there! It is there!"

"What is there?" she asked, failing to comprehend.

"The star! the star! I thought it had gone," said Bertie, breaking into ecstatic tears of gratitude. "It has not been there for ever so many nights, mother. I thought it had gone for good, and that perhaps God had gone with it."

"Oh, Bertie! Why the star was always there, every evening; it could not fail to be in its place. But some clouds have hung over the sea in the north-east these last few evenings, and they hid the star from you."

"Yes," said the child, all his confidence restored at the star's reappearance. "And God must be there too, and has not forgotten me."

"My darling, exactly as it is with that star, so it is with God's love. It may seem to be hidden from us for a time, just as the star was hidden from you. But the love is *surely there*, though the world's trials and cares may serve to obscure it, and we fancy it must be gone, as you did. Never lose your trust in God, Bertie."

"No," said the child, "not again. Look, mother, how beautiful the star is; how it shines down as though it were glad to see me again. I should like to go up to it. I wonder whether God would let me?"

"Just a little while yet, dear, first, a very few days, and you will be there," she said, amid her fast-dropping tears, as Bertie put his two little hands together in prayer.

"Our Father, which art in Heaven, please take me there for Christ's sake; Amen."

And the star was the star Capella.

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER IV.

ALICE'S FIRST DINNER PARTY.

THE shades of evening lay on Greville Gardens, South Kensington, which contained the residence of Hartley Carroll and his wife. In her own room in the house stood Edith Leicester, and with her the young guest who had so strangely and unexpectedly arrived. A smile was upon Miss Leicester's lips; the habitual calmness of her manner had given place to a restless, though subdued, excitement, which, in spite of her efforts, would not allow her to be still. A secret joy was beating in every pulse, and her steps had an elastic spring, and her laugh a gay sweetness, which had been lacking to both for many a long day. Nurse Ellis, in the midst of her hospitable preparations, looked round more than once, as if doubting her own ears. She had not seen her young lady so like her own self since her poor papa died.

"Give nurse your key, dear Alice. She will unpack for you, and put everything ready, while we go and find my sister."

Alice Kerr gave up the key, readily enough. She was long past attempting to conceal her poverty.

"Please take care of the drawings; there is nothing else to care about," she said to the civil nurse. "I have only one decent dress in the world, and I know that will look dreadfully shabby for this house. You see, I was not prepared for grand visiting."

"Leave it all to nurse—she will see that you have what is necessary," said Edith, with a nod and gesture which Ellis understood, and Alice followed her friend to Mrs. Carroll's dressing-room. There as Miss Leicester expected, Tiny was sitting over the fire, before commencing her toilette for dinner.

"I have brought you a surprise, Clare. Do you remember Alice Kerr—the little India-rubber ball, as you used to call her? She is come to stay with me till her future plans are settled, and as she is daring enough to face all London, if required, I shall want your experience as a chaperon, to watch her properly."

"Alice Kerr—nonsense!" said Tiny, smiling, as she held out a hand of welcome, without leaving her seat. "Alice Kerr was a mischievous monkey in a short frock—she never can have grown into this! I don't believe in her a bit. I never believe in people who are bigger than I am."

"I think I could bring proofs," said Alice, whom this reception at once put at her ease. "Do you remember my smuggling in a pot of jam that you wanted, and taking all the blame of the stickiness, when it ran out on the table?"

"Oh, you terrible prodigy of reminiscences! If you begin like that, I shall have to buy your secrecy. Sit down, do, and make yourself at home directly, and don't let me be shamed by any more appalling revelations. Fancy my confessing to a craving for a pot of jam! Promise not to tell my husband, Alice, and I'll take you such a drive to-morrow! You shall have a good look at London, before grappling with it."

When Edith carried her guest away to perform her toilette, the dream-like sensation increased on Alice perceptibly. For, laid out on the bed and table by the nurse's experienced hands, was every article that was deficient in Alice's own stores; and the plain barège dress, which was her sole resource, had been so deftly handled that, when seconded by the little accompaniments from Edith's wardrobe, it looked all that it could be expected to look—perhaps a little more.

"I wish," she exclaimed at last, as she surveyed herself finally in the glass, "I wish Mr. Bruce could see me now! He would hardly know me again, in these new gloves and things. I was quite ashamed to shake hands with him in those old ones."

Edith turned from her dressing-table, and smiled at the speaker; and such was the fascination of that blushing smile over Alice's imagination, that all remaining shyness melted into enthusiasm, and she made one bound into her arms.

"I can't help it!" she said, almost passionately, as she clasped Miss Leicester round the neck. "It is all so different from what everybody said it would be! I come to you without a penny in my pocket, dressed as shabbily as I well could be, and your servants let me in as if I had had an invitation, and you treat me as one of yourselves, and make me feel at home directly. And yet every book I ever read, and every person I ever consulted, laid it down as a certain rule, that a poor friend was never really welcome in a rich one's house, unless he could do something for his entertainment. Even the old German teacher, who was kinder to me than anyone else, cried when I told her my plan, and said I had better hire myself out as

maid than depend on the generosity of fashionable ladies. What would she say to see me at this hour, going down to dinner with you? By the way, do tell me, as I never was at an English dinner-party—is there anything I ought to know? Am I likely to make any mistakes?"

"My dear child," said Mrs. Carroll, who had come in, "I dare say you have been at a table d'hôte abroad. An English dinner-table is no worse than that—servants hand you things which you don't want, and you take them or leave them, just as you feel disposed. Nobody interferes with, or looks at you—or, indeed, cares whether you are eating or not. Happily for us, we do not live in the days when visitors were pressed to eat and drink. Mine would come badly off if they waited for my looking after them."

They went down together, and Alice was noticing with admiration the well-lighted staircase, with its soft carpeting and stand of hot-house flowers and ferns, when Mrs. Carroll sent her back for the water-colour sketches. "You must bring them down for my husband to see, Alice. We will wait for you here."

Alice willingly obeyed, and the sisters stood together, a fair picture in themselves, different as they were in their style of dress, as well as of beauty; the one delighting in all that was delicate of tint and soft in texture, and the other preferring materials more dark and dignified.

"And so," said Tiny, plucking a spray of fern, and fastening it into her dress, "Gabriel Bruce has found his way back again at last. I suppose we shall see him, if his cure be complete. As it must be by this time, unless the complaint be chronic."

"What complaint?"

"Oh, nothing to signify—only the old story."

"And what was that?"

"Well, I was not to mention it again, but as it is all past and gone now, it does not matter. Miss Brassington—she always knows more about you than you do yourself, of course—told me that he spoke to my father about *me*, and received an answer which would work his cure. He had nothing to live upon, worth mentioning—so, of course, poor papa would not hear of it: and I believe Mr. Bruce told somebody he was going out to Australia in consequence, and would never return till he was cured."

"And you believe this story, and have kept it secret all this time?" said Edith. The lights, the flowers, the stairs, were all dancing in a whirl of confusion before her eyes, but she commanded her voice.

"I believe some of it—I don't know how much Maude Brassington exaggerated or invented; and as Hartley was at the time following me like my shadow, I really did not excite myself about anybody else. When papa was ill I did try once to make him give me the particulars: but he stopped me at once, and hoped I had not been talking to you on the subject, as it must be all over now."

"Why did papa mention me," asked Edith, bending over the plant by which she stood, and cutting off a fragrant bloom.

"I don't know, but I think he was rather in awe of your opinion and feared you would blame———My dear, you are ruining your pretty scissors; let me get you a knife. Ah! now, what have you done to yourself?" as her sister hastily wrapped her finger in her handkerchief, and ran upstairs.

"Nothing—I will be down in a minute," said Miss Leicester.

She was almost suffocating. She ran to her room—passing Alice without seeing her—threw up the sash, and stood for a few moments in the darkness, gasping for breath. Her whole being was in a tumult that almost terrified her; the sanctuary of her soul seemed to be suddenly profaned by angry thoughts and contending passions; in whose strife contempt was hurled in turn upon herself, upon her sister, upon her father in his grave—upon the lost friend of five years ago, ust come from the other side of the world. Had she been bearing all this while the burden of self-reproach, for having driven him away from his profession to a life of toil and danger—had she counted the months, the weeks, in secret, even while telling herself they would bring her nothing, that he had given no sign, and might not even wish to return —and now that he had returned, successful in his search after fortune, had she been on the very point of assuming that it had been sought on her account, when all the time his heart had been wasted on another? Could she have been so fearfully mistaken in his looks, his words, his actions, as she must have been if Clare were not deceived? She had been longing to ask his pardon for all he had undergone—how should she ever have held up her head again, if she had read in his face that she was under a mistake? Better that she had died in her ignorance —better that she should endure anything now than that her mistake should be found out—if she had been mistaken. That "it" would return, again and again, with its quickening touch, as the numbness of desolation was creeping over her heart. Could Gabriel Bruce deceive? Could he trifle with any woman's feelings as such a belief would imply? Was he one to pay outward observance by word and sign, and in secret carry his worship elsewhere?

"The truth is sure to come out at last. I must wait, and my way will be made clear—perhaps it is as well—I shall soon be more settled, and then there will be nothing for me but work," she said to herself, in that soreness of spirit which is so often mistaken for patience; being in the mood that actually craves bodily pain, humiliation, or violent exercise, if it offers a prospect of relief from the self-inflicted torture of the mind.

Alice had caught a glimpse of her face as she passed, and could not help asking Mrs. Carroll if anything was the matter, "Not much," was the reply. "Her scissors slipped as she was cutting that azalea; and she has dropped the spray after all, so you must wear it. Now come down with me, for my husband is waiting in the drawing-room to bid you welcome."

Hartley Carroll greeted the visitor with frank heartiness, and seemed

particularly amused with her adventures. It was exactly like Bruce, he declared—nothing personal intended for Miss Kerr, to whom, of course, it would be a pleasure to be of service—but it always was Bruce's way to fall in with, and make a pet of something that had come to grief. Dogs with broken legs—birds with broken wings—anything in trouble, or hunted, or astray, was sure to find him out; and he was never so happy as when he was doctoring and feeding them up.

"So really, Miss Kerr, it must have been like a welcome back to his native land, when you gave him something to do. I only wish he had brought you here."

"I suppose we shall see him soon," said Mrs. Carroll.

"I should hope so. I shall look him up to-morrow; he will be heard of at his old club, I'll be bound. That's the first place a man goes to when he comes back—just to realise civilisation. There comes Strahan—where on earth is Edith, Tiny?"

"Here she is, and all right again, I am glad to see," said Mrs. Carroll, as her sister reappeared, with no traces left of her recent agitation, except that her colour was slightly deepened, and her manner was more animated than usual. Sir Jesse Strahan, when he entered, saw nothing but the outward appearance, and was dazzled. Her beauty was like a spell upon his senses, and it had never been more brilliant than this evening.

The assurance of Mrs. Carroll that a private dinner was only like a small table d'hôte, was not, in Alice's opinion, supported by facts. Instead of the noise and clatter which had distinguished the public repasts she had shared, the quiet was, at first, almost appalling. It seemed as if the men servants could have nothing to do but to watch how she handled her knife and fork. But Alice's imagination found opportunity, as usual, for taking notes; and she proceeded to criticise, artistically, the gentleman by Edith's side.

"Yes," she thought to herself, "I see: dark hair, with a few lines of grey—beard and whiskers cropped close—olive tint—face rather too long—forehead high but narrow—great squareness and strength about the cheek and jaw—mouth rather hard—lips too thick. There is nothing of the gentle knight there; he would be a Venetian noble, in velvet and cloth of gold, with a high cap laced with fur, and fastened with a rich jewel—one of the Council of Ten—LOREDANO, most likely; I should be sorry to be at his mercy on the rack. I don't like the look of his hands at all. And yet he ought to be, perhaps he is, somebody to like and respect; for Edith is listening to his stories, and seems quite interested, and it cannot be for the sake of the stories themselves, for they sound very dull—all about workmen and wages. If he is a rich City merchant he ought to be a patron of art, and perhaps he will patronize me. If he only would give me an order for his likeness, I am sure I could take it exactly. I wonder if Edith would care to have it? She must see how much he admires her—anyone can see that—and the more she

listens, and smiles at him, the more he seems to devour her with his eyes."

She met Mr. Carroll's eyes, which had been for the moment intent on the same object as her own. The keen intelligence in her glance seemed to strike him, for he immediately began to draw her attention to himself. He persuaded her to try a variety of unknown sweets, drew out confessions of school hardships, and told stories, in return, of his personal experiences—finally promising her a long list of London sights, and unlimited admission to all the theatres, if she would take his wife's likeness—a matter somewhat hard to arrange, as nothing would induce her to sit.

"I caught her once in a photograph, and she looked so like a witch, I ran away in the basest terror. She is one of those charming puzzles that have to be idealised, you know; directly you take her literally, you are wrong. Is it not so, Tiny?"

"You are generally wrong, dear, of course," admitted Tiny, "but I know nothing about the reason."

"No, reason is not in your line. My dear young lady," turning to Alice, "what am I about? you have no dessert"—and he filled her plate a second time with sweetmeats, in spite of feeble remonstrance.

"After such a journey as yours, nature must be supported, and there is nothing a fellow can work upon better than dried fruit and chocolate. Let me recommend them to you, in case the public and the critics make too large demands on your philosophy—or on your temper, which is much the same thing."

"Philosophy means temper, does it?"

"Doesn't it? I should think so. Wait till you have to stand by, looking amiable, while people stare vacantly at your best works, and hope you mean to finish them off more carefully, and to put in a deal more yellow. I have tried to persuade my wife into chocolate, but hitherto I have failed; as I always do when I try to get my own way."

"After that," said Mrs. Carroll, rising, "we had better go. I wonder whose way you do get, if not your own? Edith's, or Sir Jesse's?"

"Neither the one nor the other. I hardly know which would ruin me first," observed Hartley, as he opened the door for the ladies. "When Edith begins to make money, and Strahan to throw it away——"

"That is your idea of giving, Carroll?" said Sir Jesse, who did not appear displeased at being thus mentioned in conjunction with Miss Leicester. His voice was slightly tremulous, and his eyes glittered with elation of spirits. He had never before felt so sanguine of ultimate success, and Hartley could hardly believe his own senses. A glance passed between him and his wife, unmarked by anyone else, but mutually understood.

As the door closed behind them, Mrs. Carroll looked at her sister, and was touched by the expression of weariness which had succeeded to animation. She put her arm affectionately on her shoulder as they

entered the drawing-room. "You don't mind Hartley's nonsense. You know he would have his say about your doings, if you were Madame de Maintenon at St. Cyr, and le Grand Monarque stood glowering by. He and Alice seem to have become mightily confidential and intimate, by the way, considering she is a young lady who never dined out before. Was it as alarming as you expected, little waif?"

Alice owned it was rather trying at first, when everybody was so quiet, and spoke so softly; it was much more like dining à la carte in a private room than being at the table d'hôte. Some rich tourists once invited her father and herself, and they were two hours at dinner, and she nearly went to sleep.

"Well, I might have gone to sleep too, for all the conversation that fell to my share," said Tiny. "Edith, I never saw Sir Jesse in so gracious a mood. I am sure you have set him to do something for you."

"Perhaps I have," said Edith, smiling.

"Well, take care what you are about. Do you know, Alice, she has a terrible habit of trying her admirers in that way; they don't all like it; and some day, as I tell her, she will find herself, like poor Lady Kunigund, with her glove tossed in her face."

"Delorges was a French knight," said Alice. "Papa always said no English gentleman would have behaved like that. A true knight and lover would have let the leopards tear him to shreds before he would have insulted the woman he *had* loved, even if he did not care for her any more!"

"Upon my word, my dear, you talk as if you knew a vast deal more about it than you have any business to know at your age; my own opinion is that he served her quite right. And pray, how many English knights have you ever seen? There is Sir Jesse for one—he was knighted for some political reason which I forget—but I would not recommend his being trifled with."

"I do not mean that sort of knight; I mean a true gentleman, with a generous soul, like—like Mr. Bruce, for instance," said Alice, colouring with her own ardent fancy. "Such men have no mean spite—you may wear out their love, but not their magnanimity."

"France has not spoiled you, Alice," said Edith, tenderly. Her eyes were full of tears, and she turned away to open the precious portfolio, placing the drawings in a favourable light upon an easel that had been brought into the room. "I am anxious that these should be appreciated," she added, "for Sir Jesse has a very good collection, and it is in his power to be of great use to you. Did you have them valued, my dear?"

"No; I hoped to get that done in London. But I am not going to part with any of them before Mr. Bruce has had the refusal, you know."

"Mr. Bruce is to have the refusal? Well, he used to be a very fair judge, I think; but as he may not be aware of the value of what

he refuses—if he does refuse—there will be no harm done by hearing what Sir Jesse Strahan says on the matter."

Something in the quiet voice startled Tiny as she listened. A new light flashed through her understanding.

"Where was Mr. Bruce going to put up, Alice?" she said, sitting down to her writing-table.

"Joel said they were to sleep at the Carlton Hotel."

"Does he look civilised enough for a five o'clock tea? Not that it signifies; his pick and cradle would only make a sensation. There, I have sent him an invitation for to-morrow afternoon, for if he wants things kept for him, he must come and make up his mind. Let us see which he is likely to choose."

The three sketches—they were nothing more—formed part of a series intended to illustrate Walter Scott's poems: a scheme which had been for years a favourite with the artist, and which, had he only worked out according to the original conception, might have secured him both fortune and fame. Perhaps the finest of the three was the scene of the Hostelry, in Marmion, at the moment when the Palmer speaks his word of augury, waking ghastly echoes in the heart of the guilty man. The groups round the hearth and table—the drinking vessels—the weapons and harness flung carelessly in corners—the old rafters, blackened with the smoke of countless fires—were all dashed in with wonderful spirit and correctness of drawing. But it was not this picture that arrested the eye of Clare. It was the companion sketch—another interior, but of a fairer aspect—Rokeby Hall, where Matilda, with the soft sadness on her brow, sat between her two generous wooers—passing her last evening in her ancestral home. Less finished even than the other, it would not have attracted her attention so quickly, but for the likeness she saw at once in the central figure. It was Edith herself—idealised, as a face becomes that is drawn from memory—but, singularly enough, much more like her, as she stood before it at that moment, than as the painter saw her last—as if his genius had intuitively worked on nature's plan, and drawn her, not as she had been, but as she was to be.

Alice, who had forgotten the resemblance—for she had only discovered the sketches after his death, and had had very little time to study them—uttered an exclamation of delighted surprise, and Edith's deep blush showed that she was not insensible to the homage thus paid to her from the grave. But Tiny's resolution was taken at once.

"Alice, do as I bid you this moment. Put those sketches back into the portfolio—quick, now, before Knowles brings in the coffee!"

Her manner was so imperative that Alice could only obey: and when the butler came in Mrs. Carroll gave him the portfolio, desiring it should be handed directly to Mrs. Ellis's care.

"I have quite made up my mind," she said, when they were again alone, "I will see fair play in this picture dealing. They shall be shown to-morrow, and the world shall see them if it desires to do so;

but Mr. Bruce has a right to the first inspection, and nobody else shall interfere with it. Don't be afraid, Alice, that I shall spoil your market; if my husband set eyes on that Matilda, he would never rest till he had coaxed you out of it, and I am sure I do not know when you would be paid. I am dreadfully jealous that there is no flattering portrait of me."

"Let me try my hand now," said Alice, imploringly, as Hartley's wish came into her mind.

"Oh, by all means, if you will promise to do me justice, which no one has ever done yet. Edith, do open the piano—I know those poor men are sick to death of each other's company."

Her sister willingly complied, and while she was calming her troubled spirit with the help of Mendelssohn's genius, Tiny, reclining in her easy chair, and pondering over the discoveries of the day, forgot Alice altogether, until roused by the entry of the gentlemen. Directly Mr. Carroll saw what his young guest was doing, he made a bound to her side.

"You are a born genius!" he exclaimed, holding up in exultation the fragment of paper on which she had made a pen-and-ink outline, not free from faults to a critical eye, but so spirited in the touch, and happy in the likeness, that it fairly deserved the praises bestowed by all the party. It made her at once the heroine of the evening. Sir Jesse gravely pronounced his opinion that a young lady who could draw like that ought to rise high in her glorious profession, and, spurred on by Edith's approving smile, proceeded to suggest a course of regular study at the School of Art, to which he would himself give her an introduction, besides inviting her to see his own private gallery, and take copies of whatever she most admired. This encouragement, added to the thanks and commendations of her friends, was the overflowing drop in Alice's happiness. Her tired spirits could stand no more, and, to her own consternation, she burst into such a fit of crying that Edith was fain to take her off to bed.

"I want what you cannot give me—I want to be able to show you my gratitude," sobbed Alice. "It was your goodness to my poor father that made him remember your face so well—because he thought of you so often. Oh, if he had only lived to complete that picture, and make you famous all over the world!"

"To be remembered in one kind heart is fame enough for the present," said Edith, "and all I ask of yours to-night is that you will be quiet, and try to sleep. Trust your past, present, and future, to your Father in heaven, who has brought you to the house of your friends, and given you work to do there which He will show you in His own time. No, my dear child, I will not listen to a word more. Let to-morrow alone—you cannot touch it, neither can I—and God only knows what it may bring us—and whether ——"

She became suddenly aware that her self-command was failing; she put Alice from her with a hasty kiss, and retired to her own room to prepare for the morrow—as she had often done before.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE SQUIRE KEPT WATCH AT NIGHT.

Sir Jesse Strahan's brougham stopped at the Carlton Hotel, and Sir Jesse himself alighted, and walked in, with the air of one familiar with the premises.

"Is Mr. Bruce here?" was his first question of a waiter, who came forward directly the well-known figure was visible.

"Yes, Sir Jesse; he sleeps here to night."

"Is he in the coffee-room?"

"I will inquire, Sir Jesse. No, Sir Jesse, I beg your pardon," as another waiter whispered a word of information; "Mr. Bruce has stepped out, sir, but his servant is here, if you wish to leave a message."

"Ask his servant to step this way."

In a few minutes Sir Jesse Strahan found a young man standing before him, with a dark skin and black beard, as unlike the ordinary specimen of the class as could well be. The great contractor, for such he was, gazed at Martin with as much perplexity as had troubled Mr. Forrest, and was hesitating how to address him, when he was relieved by the civil inquiry, "Did you wish to speak to me, sir?"

"I have a note for Mr. Bruce—I promised my friend Mrs. Carroll that I would leave it as I came by; be so good as to let him have it as soon as he comes in."

"He shall, sir. Whose name shall I mention, if you please?"

"Give him my card. I hope to have the pleasure of meeting him to-morrow. He is well, I hope?"

"Perfectly well, sir, thank you."

"Had you a good voyage?"

"Yes, sir—pretty good."

"Do you remain here long?"

"I have received no orders on the subject, sir."

Sir Jesse lighted a cigar, and moved towards the door; but the riddle was on his mind, and he could not leave it behind him without a trial.

"Have I ever seen you before?" he asked, abruptly.

Martin smiled: and replied it was not very likely.

"Were you born in Australia?"

"I never heard that I was, sir."

"Why, you must know whether you remember England or not, my good fellow."

"True, sir, but it does not follow that everybody should know it too."

"Certainly not—I have no such impertinent curiosity. You are like some one I have seen, and I cannot remember whom—that is all. My compliments to your master. Good night."

Martin bowed in silence, and Sir Jesse re-entered his brougham, little knowing that he had been all the while puzzling an unseen spectator as much as the dark Australian puzzled him. He drove off to his whist club; but on the way he gave a hint to his own confidential servant that any information about Martin would be rewarded, and all necessary outlay defrayed. In consequence of this, Mr. Simmons reappeared at the hotel to inquire about some particular wines on their list; and, being welcomed as an old friend by the waiters, easily drew them into conversation. He heard, what he could see with his own eyes, that Mr. Bruce's servant was sitting in a little room opening into the hall, where they said he had been ever since his master went out, and would stay till his return. Nobody could make anything of him, and the general idea was that he might be a convict who had served his time.

"They say the colonies is full of 'em, you know," said one.

"What do you say, Mr. Jones?" inquired another, of a stranger, who had his face tied up in a thick handkerchief under a fur cap, so as to leave very little of his features visible. He had been sitting apart from the speakers, rocking himself to and fro occasionally with pain, and yet seeming somewhat amused by what he overheard. At the question he shook his head.

"They are a wild set, out there. I have had some narrow escapes in my time. But then you get such chances—such as a man never has here. You may be next door to starving to-day, and be making your thousands to-morrow—you never know when your luck may come—and I reckon you don't find that much of a puzzle in these quarters of yours."

"I won't say that. There's your master, now, Simmons; he's always coming in for something lucky. They say whatever he touches turns up trumps."

"It didn't always, then," said the head waiter. "I've heard my father say it were touch and go with the firm when Strahan went into it first as a young man. They had a lot of contracts on just when the Chartist riots began, and it was all they could do to steer clear."

"But they weathered it, you see."

"Yes, they did that. But, as I say, it was touch and go."

"It would take a deal more to shake us now," said Simmons, with dignity. "We could buy your place over your heads with a stroke of the pen, and not think twice about it. There's hundreds goes out in wages every week; and as to situations, why, we've a score of folks at a time begging and praying us to put in a good word for them, that they may get in anyhow, and so have a chance of luck."

"Yes, it is a good thing when a friend will speak a word for you," observed Mr. Jones, pressing his hand to his suffering jaw. "One good turn deserves another, they say, though it don't always get it."

He contrived to catch Simmons's eye, unperceived by the sur-

rounding waiters, and that functionary saw at once he had some information to give.

"I say, Tom," he cried, turning to the one nearest him, "can't we have a grill of something tender for supper somewhere cosy—just the set of us—I'm off duty for a couple of hours, and I'll stand treat—and we'll try and cure Mr. Jones's toothache with a bottle or two out of your best bin."

The proposal was accepted with applause, but Mr. Jones piteously observed there was only one thing would do him good, and that was not sold on the premises—chloroform.

"But you'll get a dose at the chemist's," said Simmons.

"I daren't stir out in the cold air—it would madden me."

"Then one of you fellows will go and fetch it. You, Dick."

So the stuff was fetched. And Simmons was left alone with the stranger, who was cautiously beginning to apply his chosen remedy.

"Mind what you're doing—that's ticklish stuff to handle," observed Simmons, as he drew a chair near the sufferer.

"So it is, sir; you are right. I'll wait a bit now, and try it when I go to bed. I'm well-nigh worn out, that's the truth."

"Have a glass of something hot—I'll call for it," said the magnificent Simmons; and a tumbler of brandy and water was speedily placed on the table. Mr. Jones tasted it, and expressed his satisfaction.

"It is easy to see that you are in a good situation, sir; your master—what is his name?"

"Strahan—Sir Jesse Strahan."

"How long has he been Sir Jesse?"

"He was knighted some eight years ago."

"Is there a Lady Strahan?"

"No—he's been a widower ever so long. But if I'm not very much mistaken, there'll be a Lady Strahan soon—and a beauty. Come, Mr. Jones, have a little more brandy and water."

"To tell you the truth, sir, I'm a plain man, and not used to push myself among my betters, but it do go against me to drink alone. If a gentleman takes a glass with me, why, it does me good."

"That sha'n't stand in your way," said Simmons, and a second supply was called for.

Before it was finished, their heads had come much nearer each other, and conversation had become interesting—almost confidential. And by the time supper was ready, they had arrived at a friendly understanding, satisfactory to both parties.

Meanwhile, the tide of travel was flowing and ebbing as usual; trains came in and went out, and passengers arrived at the hotel, and not one passed unnoted by Martin from his watch post. All attempts to fraternise with him having proved fruitless, he had been left to his own devices, and read his newspaper tranquilly.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when Gabriel Bruce returned, accompanied by Joel. The friendly supper was over by this time, and Mr.

Simmons had gone home. Mr. Jones, by favour of the head waiter, was still nursing his toothache over the fire in the room where they had supped.

Martin went forward, as his master appeared, and relieved him of his hat. "A note and card for you, sir, if you please."

"Already?" He opened the note with an eager hand, and his eyes sparkled at the contents.

"To-morrow—a day within my time. Who has called on me? Sir Jesse Strahan. That is a good name on the back of a bill, I believe—but I don't remember meeting him anywhere. Any other news, Martin?"

"None, sir."

"And what have you been doing? Have you had no rest, and no supper?"

"I have had all I wanted, thank you, sir. Shall I show you your bedroom?"

"Aye, if you will. Joel, what are you hunting for?"

"A strap of mine, sir, that I put down somewhere when you called me to go out. One of the waiters may have found it. I'll see."

He looked first into one room and then into another, where the gas had been turned down to a glimmering twilight, but without finding anyone; till catching sight of a door ajar, he quietly put in his head, and discovered Mr. Jones.

There was very little of him to be seen, for his handkerchief nearly covered his face; and as Joel appeared, he pulled his fur cap lower over his forehead—perhaps on account of the draught. The Cornishman looked at him for a moment with some curiosity, but the light was very dim, and he could not quite make him out; Mr. Bruce was calling, and he had no right to intrude on a stranger, so he only muttered an apology, and withdrew. They were waiting for him at the foot of the stairs, and Martin immediately spoke.

"What is it?"

"Nothing to speak of—but there is a chap in there I can't make out."

"Now I tell you what, both of you," said Gabriel, arresting Martin as he was starting off, "I won't have any more of this to-night. It is too late, and all we have to do is to go to bed as quietly as we can. Go up first, Ironhand, and show us our rooms, and you, Joel, follow close. You'll have us all three taken up for suspicious characters if you don't mind what you are about."

His word was law, and his followers obeyed him, silenced but not convinced. Their rooms lay at a height that required some patient climbing; but nothing more was said till they entered the one destined for Mr. Bruce, opening into another with two beds. Both chambers having been carefully investigated in every corner, Martin secured the outer doors, and then relieved mind and muscles simultaneously by a vehement stretch and yawn.

"Tired for once, old fellow?" said Gabriel, laughing.

"Well," was the reply, "a fortnight of this work would tire anyone. The place seems alive, every brick and stone in it; there is no hearing anything for the incessant roar."

"Aye, you had to learn that keeping watch in London and in the bush require a different sort of training. We have to trust here more to a general system than to individual sharpness of eye and ear; but it answers, more or less, as you will find. Don't look so worried, man—you have done all in your power; now go to sleep, for it would not make us a bit the safer if we took turns in sitting up."

"About to-morrow?" said Martin, without arguing the point. "Have you decided anything?"

"You decided it yourself by handing me that note. It is from Mrs. Carroll, to invite me for to-morrow afternoon."

"I see. Have you done anything to-night?"

"Yes, I have seen my old friend and lawyer, Herbert. It was too bad to disturb him in his after-dinner nap, but he was as hearty as ever—it all looked so exactly as I saw it last, I could hardly believe it was five years ago. They made a great fuss with Joel, as a west countryman; in fact, Joel's head is getting turned, and I am thinking of pensioning him off. Herbert knows all about Low-levels, by the way, and laughs at our ghost, though he only suggests explanations, like everybody else. He has a client in that neighbourhood, and goes down from time to time on her business, so he will put us in the way of arranging affairs. My idea was to take a lodging in town for a week, and while I am attending to our money matters, you two could run down into Devon, and see the place."

Joel, on his knees by his master's portmanteau, whistled softly. It was his usual warning of danger, and Martin drily observed that if he were not man enough to look at a house by himself, he had better stay where he was.

"Oh, have it your own way, then. I did think I might express an opinion, when we were by ourselves; but I see you are afraid to unbend, and will be prime minister at home as well as abroad. Settle it between yourselves, only let me go to sleep."

Gabriel did not look as if sleep were so imminent, to judge by the dancing of his eyes; but his followers took the hint, and retired to their own apartment. Before they had been there many minutes, he stood in the doorway.

"Boys, don't think me a born idiot. I see and hear as well as yourselves that you don't care what risks you run, if you can stand between them and me; so I have just one thing to say on that matter. The first of you two who gets into trouble by taking more risk than his share, I discharge without a character. Do you hear, gentlemen?"

"Yes, sir," said Joel, grinning complacently, "and if so be as you'll promote me to a certain lady's service, I'll trouble you for my discharge to-morrow."

"You impudent rascal, your head has been turned by your extraordinary good luck. She is worth all we went through—isn't she, Corporal Trim?"

"She's just the greatest beauty that ever trod the earth," said sympathising Joel. "She's all a gallant gentleman could be proud to make his own, and prouder will I be to have the honour of serving 'em both."

"God bless you, Joel. There, go to bed, and wake in a more sensible frame of mind."

And Gabriel, with a beaming face, went back to his room. They heard him moving about for a little while, and then all was quiet. Joel, who had promptly obeyed orders, was nearly asleep, when Martin's voice roused him.

"Joel!"

"Aye, aye, what is it?"

"No doubt about it's being Wily Wilkins?"

"None at all."

"And he is on our trail at this moment."

"Shouldn't wonder."

"I have been thinking it well over—it was next to impossible that he could have sailed with us. That French boat passed us in the night, remember—he must have got ahead of us, and laid his plans to keep us always in sight. Some one must have helped him to give us the slip at Dover."

Joel murmured assent at the opening of this speech, but lost all that followed. Presently he was roused again.

"I say, corporal!"

"What's up now?"

"What's up? I wish *you* were—there's no getting a word out of you. That lady he loves—what is she like?"

"Like?" said Joel, drowsily, "like—like I don't know what. She is first-rate, she is—and—and no mistake about it," murmured he, half unconsciously, for sleepiness is not favourable to enthusiasm.

"Does she care for him?" inquired the questioner, abruptly.

"She didn't say she didn't."

"What will he do if she disappoints him? Can you tell me that?"

"Try another claim," murmured Joel; "bigger fish in the sea than ever ——" The rest was lost.

"Aye, it is easily said," muttered the other, "but Gabriel Bruce is one of those who will venture his all on one cast of the net, and if that fail him, he will be for throwing himself after it. You are asleep, are you? I wonder when *I* shall sleep, in such a place as this?"

He sat down at a small table in one corner, drew the candle near, and taking out a leathern case, began examining and pondering over some of the contents. While so engaged, his dark, strongly-defined features underwent more than one rapid change, and the face and

figure, seen in that feeble light—as it fell on the spare, sun-burnt hands, so full of muscular power, yet so light and neat in their touch—would have been a study, either for artist, or student of human nature; and would, probably, have perplexed both.

He had perplexed many before that night.

There was in the man a blending of characteristics, all bearing the same impress of power. Self-reliance, acquired by experience of his own resources—keen perception of any new difficulty only quickening the wit by which it was to be encountered—total absence of personal fear, combined with the most untiring vigilance against possible surprise—devoted attachment and abnegation of self where he could attach himself, combined with passionate hatred towards possible enemies—an intensity of purpose, the instinct of his old wild life, in carrying out an enterprise, whether in pursuit of revenge, or game, or gold—such were the leading traits in the friend whom the well-born and gently-nurtured Gabriel Bruce had won in his brief but fierce struggle with fortune. And the love between the two was none the less fervent that each knew comparatively little of the other's earlier days. Friends they were, knit together as only those can be who have shared what those men had, and found each other equal to every demand; but Martin, from the first, treated him as his superior in station, and exacted a promise, on accompanying him to England, that the distinction should be maintained. The connection between them, in fact, sufficiently resembled that of chivalrous times to justify the artistic discernment of Alice Kerr: knight, squire, and yeoman. Gabriel Bruce was the master, not only of the Ironhand, the rider and hunter of the Australian bush, but also of big, powerful, warm-hearted Joel Treherne, whose stature and strength were the admiration of the stockmen and diggers among whom he had wandered in that vague search after fortune which the bull's horn had so nearly terminated. The gallant gentleman who saved his life by his coolness and dexterity won his affection from that moment; and thus it was Gabriel Bruce's lot to become lord of a dominion no money could have purchased—the devotion of two free hearts, whose love would have made them follow him to death.

A clue to the feelings of Martin might have been found by anyone who had seen him, an hour later, stealing into the other room for a glance at his sleeping friend. The blind had been left undrawn, and the moon was now shining clear and bright; her beams fell across the bed where Gabriel Bruce was lying—his face towards the window, one arm lightly thrown round his head—sleeping the deep, calm sleep of tired health, his well-cut features distinctly visible in the beauty of repose. In the open brow and sweet-formed mouth were plainly indicated those leading traits of his nature—frankness and kindliness—traits not so rare in themselves, even among the rough wrestlers with fate whom Martin the Ironhand knew so well, but rare, in his experience, as combined with refinement and education.

His dark face softened and relaxed as he stood in the moonlight, watching the quiet rest he had so often guarded under tent and tree, and with the unusual tenderness of expression every feature became for a moment transfigured. The love, breathing in every line, was as if a ray from a holier world had fallen on Martin's countenance; and it would not have been difficult to read there, beneath the external hardening of his wild life, the touches of something more closely akin to social refinement than its owner knew of—traces of half-forgotten associations, confused and misunderstood, yet as surely influencing the character of the man as words whose derivation is ignored help to constitute a language.

Only for a few moments did he thus stand and look—just long enough to appease the vague uneasiness which had never left him since their landing. Then, as if satisfied and calmed by the comparative stillness of the streets, he was about to retire to rest, when his eye was suddenly caught by the handle of the door.

The moonlight enabled him to see it plainly. It was being slowly, cautiously turned.

He had taken off his boots before entering the room, and his footfall was as noiseless as an Indian's. He listened for a moment, and then glided into the next room, touching his comrade lightly on the shoulder, with the guarded whisper: "Joel! Danger! Get up!"

The instinct of their old life made the Cornishman spring up without uttering a sound, and while he was hurrying on his clothes, Martin unlocked their door, and looked out. Nothing was to be seen in the dim gaslight beyond the ordinary display of boots and shoes; but his keen ear caught the echo of stealthy, flying feet, and he followed it, not without caution, to the bottom of a staircase. Here he stopped to listen again: but all was perfectly still; and Joel, who came out with a lighted candle, found him there, at fault.

"I can hear nothing," he whispered, "and it may be a feint to draw us out of the room."

"What was it?"

"The door was tried. That I can swear."

"Some one who couldn't find his own room, maybe—or perhaps it was Boots."

"Perhaps. Give me the light a moment. What is that?"

Something dark was lying on one of the stairs, as if dropped in the hurry of ascending.

As Joel picked it up, he gave his low warning whistle. "Seen this before."

"Where?"

"Down below—fur cap—feels like 'possum. Take care—there's something in it."

"Come back to our room," whispered Martin, and led the way. They soon regained their quarters, and found Mr. Bruce was still asleep. With hunter's instinct they examined the evidence.

"I thought the set of his shoulders was like somebody's, and I looked closer, and I could swear to the cap; it was pulled over his ears, and a handkerchief was tied all over his cheeks."

"Here it is," said Martin, drawing it out. "Something's tied in one corner."

Out came an ounce phial. Martin would have drawn the cork, but Joel stopped his hand.

"I know the look of that," he said, "we see enough of that in hospital. That's chloroform, that is."

"Chloroform?"

"Aye; don't you see? For his toothache. It's a rare remedy; and how the gentleman will sleep without it I can't think. Don't fasten the door, mate; he may call again, and I'd be loth to rob him of his own. I'd try and cure him myself, if I got the chance. It sha'n't be my fault if I miss it to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRAGG'S COURT AFFAIR.

ALICE slept luxuriously; no dreams of past troubles or future hopes interfered with the full enjoyment of such repose as she had not tasted for many a night. It was much later than any accustomed hour when she roused herself from her downy nest to ascertain what o'clock it was; and when her friendly attendant, the nurse, came in with a cup of coffee, she found the young lady in a state of considerable flurry and trepidation, at having behaved so ill on her first morning. Nurse took it very easily; there was no need of any hurry, or any repentance; Miss Edith was not come in from church, and Mrs. Carroll had not yet rung her bell. She had not called Miss Kerr sooner, because, after her fatigue, a nice long sleep would do her good; and she would be in excellent time for breakfast.

And so it proved, for she was just ready when Edith came for her. And they had half finished their morning meal before the entrance of either master or mistress.

If the evening had seemed pleasant to Alice, while still unrested, the morning in that luxurious house, now that fatigue was forgotten, and her spirits were rising with the novelty and excitement, was still more so. The fragrant coffee, the delicate china, the choice viands on the sideboard, all belonged, as she said, to the world she had read about in novels, but had not expected to enter so soon—never, indeed, unless her great vision were realised, and she succeeded in making her fortune.

"You cannot be great without money," she said, so seriously as to make Edith smile. "I have discovered that a long while."

"There are worse things than poverty, Alice."

"Have you ever tried being poor?"

"Not in the sense you mean, I daresay."

"Then you cannot judge. Look at those sketches of dear papa's. He never had a chance—that wretched want of money was always his stumbling-block. He had to paint what would sell fast, and often at very low prices, and had no time to work out his great ideas. Poor people never have."

"Don't you think being rich might be a worse hindrance still?"

"I only wish I had the chance of trying."

"You only wish for what, Miss Kerr?" asked Hartley, entering. "I am one of your slaves—what shall I fetch you?"

"Alice wishes to be rich," said Edith, "as a step towards greatness in her art."

"The thought is not exactly new—I have myself imagined my genius would develop more freely on an additional thousand or two per annum. But don't waste your theories on Edith, Miss Kerr; tell *me*, in confidence, how you mean to set about it, and rely on my sympathy, especially if you succeed. Let me give you some of this pie; it is an art-treasure in itself, full of hidden beauties, known only to the initiated. You don't mean to say you have breakfasted already? How little you must have on your mind, to be sure, that you can afford to put so little on your plate!"

"I thought care was supposed to take the appetite away, Mr. Carroll.'

"Wrong, I assure you: as popular beliefs generally are. When you have got into the full swing of artistic labours—half London admiring and the other half abusing you, and more orders on your hands than you can execute, we shall see what sort of a breakfast you will be obliged to make."

"I would take the risk of that if I could only get the orders."

"Well, have you not secured the great Strahan as your patron! And is not that a fortune—or tantamount to one? I shall be quite disappointed, being a thoroughly disinterested man, if I do not soon find you so oppressively rich that it will be quite a kindness to borrow of you."

"When it comes to *that*, I shall be proud indeed."

"Shall you? The first time I ever met with anybody who looked upon it in that light."

"Well, really—Mr. Bruce, yesterday, when he was paying for me all the way, did it just as if the favour had been on my side, and the obligation on his."

"Dear man, what a blessing he will be in society! I hope Strahan did not forget to leave Tiny's invitation. I'll look in at his banker's, by and by—he is sure to be heard of there; and, fresh from the diggings, must have a good balance. I have half a mind to try the gold-fields myself, if Tiny will go too. Will you, Tiny?" as his wife came into the room, gave a kind nod of greeting to Alice, and allowed Edith to wait upon her.

"I'll hear first what our friend Mr. Bruce says about it," said Tiny. "Alice, my dear, you must make up your mind to be looked at this afternoon, as well as your drawings. Some ladies are coming to tea who have a *fureur* for art; and when I told them I had an artist's daughter in my house, who meant to be an artist herself, they flew into a wonderful state of excitement. I don't know what they expect to see—something ethereally beautiful, and supernaturally gifted, I doubt not."

"But," stammered Alice, looking from one to the other, "I am not prepared for a party."

"You have not brought your dresses with you? We'll see to that after breakfast. I promised you a drive if you kept my secret, and I know you have."

Alice laughed; she did not know what to say to all this good fortune. She had thought over-night how hard she would set to work the first thing, that she might have a drawing ready for sale; but of this there seemed no chance at present. When she went up to her room, there she found nurse Ellis, busily engaged with a pale young woman, cutting out patterns for her special benefit; and it was briefly explained that this was by Miss Leicester's orders, and that the needlewoman, Grace Pyne, was well known to the ladies, and came from Edith's district. Furthermore, it transpired that a portion of Miss Leicester's wardrobe, which she could very well spare, only wanted a little arranging and contriving to be just what her guest required for immediate use.

"I assure you, Alice," said Edith, when they were alone, "you are doing me a kindness by finding me this opportunity. I am sometimes at a loss how to help this poor struggling Grace Pyne, and she would be hurt if I offered assistance in any way but work. You will be interested in her when you know her story; but there is no time for that now. You are to be my sister's property this morning, and the carriage will be round in ten minutes."

So Alice went out with Mrs. Carroll, and was taken to a wonderful establishment, with a still more wonderful woman in it, to whom fairy godmothers seemed dolts in comparison—who found her dresses ready-made and trimmed, and only just wanting a tap of the wand here, and a stamp of the foot there, according to fairy rules, to become a costume for Cinderella. Then she brought out all manner of charming appurtenances in the best possible taste, to give what she called "finish," as far as could be given in mourning; and without any trouble, or a word about expense, it was all settled, and the box would be sent to Mrs. Carroll's by four o'clock, without fail.

"Oh!" thought Alice, "what it is to be rich!"

From that enchanted ground they went to other grounds, gathering spoil at each, as if London had been waiting for Alice Kerr all this time, and only wondered why she did not come sooner. When all this was accomplished, Mrs. Carroll indulged her with a somewhat

hasty glimpse of a winter exhibition of old masters, took her once round the Park—where the first buds were beginning to gleam through the darkness of bough and stem—and brought her back for the excellent luncheon in a state of rapture that only added to the keenness of young appetite.

After luncheon there was a lull; some early visitors absorbed her friends, and she was left at liberty to amuse herself as she pleased—the whole house, with its manifold resources of books, magazines, pictures, and photographs, being at her disposal. After wandering about some little time, she was caught by nurse Ellis to be fitted; during which ceremony she had leisure to study the features of Edith's protégée, Grace Pyne. She was too commonplace for a touching picture, and too pale and silent for a bright one.

Mrs. Ellis was ready to tell what she knew of the young woman. They were good girls, Grace and her sister Lucy, and they lived together in a model lodging-house in the city, and were well known to their clergyman, Mr. Forrest, and went to church regularly, and helped him on Sundays to teach the little riff-raff he picked up out of the streets.

"But this is only being good and industrious; I don't call that interesting, you know, Mrs. Ellis."

"Don't you, then, my dear? Well, for my part, I know nothing more so. And I can tell you this, Miss Kerr, that you'll find, when you're as old as I am, it's none so common as you seem to think."

Alice asked no more questions; and her new equipment soon after arriving from Madame Delphine's, she forgot alike her curiosity and Grace Pyne. She little knew—as little as anyone else in the house—how the thread of that obscure existence was entwined with their own—and destined to colour their future.

Twelve years before, the newspapers and the public had been for many weeks strongly excited about a case of burglary in the City—generally mentioned as the Cragg's Court affair. The interest it created was not merely from its being a burglary, with intent to rob, if not to murder; but was due to some mysterious circumstances, which all the sagacity of police, courts, and jurymen had failed to clear up.

The facts, as far as known, amounted to these.

The house belonged to an old dealer in curiosities, of the name of Oram, and was full, from top to bottom, of the miscellaneous articles comprehended in that title. He employed several workmen in the various branches of his business—but the only inmate of the house, besides himself, was a half-witted boy, commonly called Zack, whom he had trained to perform a certain routine of menial services, and who slept at night, as a dog might have done, curled up on a mat outside his master's door.

One foggy night the premises were broken into, and, whether by accident or intention did not appear, were set on fire; and before the alarm was given, and the neighbourhood aroused to a sense of danger,

a considerable portion of the stock in trade had been consumed Oram himself was found in a state of insensibility, from which he only partially recovered for a few hours, and then died, after having made several attempts to explain something, of which only broken sentences could be understood. His nearest of kin did their best, by the help of counsel and detectives, to solve the mystery of his death; but without gaining the desired result.

One circumstance excited peculiar attention. The two doctors who watched the old man's last moments both swore to his having spoken these words—"Darch knew it." To their intelligence this conveyed but little, until it transpired, in the course of the inquiry, that a young man named Darch Williams had been employed by the deceased as a working jeweller, but had left his service within the last few weeks. On cross-examination, the witness who mentioned this, one John Tombs by name, a picture cleaner and "restorer," confessed to having given Williams a friendly warning that the master meant to be down upon him, and that if all was not square he had better make himself scarce. When asked to explain, he did so by stating it was the deceased's way to set a trap for any workman whom he doubted, and he had given him, John Tombs, to understand that the trap had been set for Darch with intent to catch him—a measure which Darch wisely defeated by disappearance. In fact, no one seemed to have seen or heard anything of him since.

Of course rewards were offered for his apprehension, or for any news of him whatsoever, and for months afterwards the City police were kept on the alert, tantalized by occasional hopes of a rich discovery, but always compelled in the end to confess their failure. Darch was gone; and so was another individual, supposed, in consequence, to have perished in the fire. This was poor Zack, the idiot; and a piteous scene took place in court, when his mother had to give evidence of his devotion to his hard master, and his wonderful sagacity in carrying out his commands. To be sure, as she owned with tears when cross-questioned, it was hardly a fit life for a Christian innocent, to be always at the heels of a Jew. But Zack got his food, and liked the shop, and was useful to the old gentleman, and there was seven of them at home to feed—and what could a poor soul do? A subscription was opened for her on the spot, to which several Jewish dealers contributed handsomely.

The story, by degrees, faded out of public notice; only preserved by those it more immediately concerned. The papers and accounts having been destroyed in the fire, Mr. Oram's relations divided his property, as far as it could be recovered; it was shrewdly conjectured that some of his private customers, who preserved a most discreet reticence, were secretly ready to dance for joy. The sale of the Cragg's Court stock, however, which took place on the final settlement of affairs, drew hundreds of people to inspect and bid; and the value which so strangely attaches to anything connected with a

notorious crime more than compensated the heirs, it was supposed, for their unknown losses.

The fact that so much property had been left untouched, was a part of the mystery: and the interest seemed to extend even to the bricks and mortar of the premises, as they were purchased by no less a bidder than the firm of Strahan and Co., building contractors, by whose orders they were pulled down, and the materials employed elsewhere. The offer of reward was withdrawn at last, and the whole matter left in repose.

But there was one person in the great city, whose name, happily for her, did not transpire, but who carried the story henceforth indelibly graven on the tables of her heart.

Twelve years ago, Grace Pyne, then serving her apprenticeship in the kitchen of a London hotel, had found the toil and heat and smells and sounds in which her young days, and some of her nights, were being spent, all softened and brightened by hope and love—hope drawing hourly towards fulfilment—love, intensified by separation and difficulty. No matter what people said of Darch Williams—of the company he kept—the habits he indulged in—the doubtful nature of some of his occupations—what matter if all the world doubted him, so long as she knew what he was, and what he would show himself to be in good time? Had he not confided to her that he knew more secrets in his trade than would make any man's fortune, who had patience to wait for it—and did he not show her his cleverness by presenting her with a brooch and earrings of his own making—stones, setting and all—that were so much too handsome, and like ladies' real jewels, that she could only lock them up in her box, and had them stolen at the end of a week? And did he not tell her, the last Sunday evening they spent together, when she had her turn of rest from more than six days' labour, that he had just completed a famous job for his master, which would enable them to marry as soon as she could give warning. They had even settled on the house they would take, in which he was to have a shop, and she was to let lodgings—who would say that Darch Williams was not steady after that?

Alas for all this confidence and hope, so freely given—so scantily repaid! From the hour of that happy meeting, they had never met again, and all she had heard of her lost lover, in these twelve long years, was through the columns of the daily press, in its record of the Cragg's Court affair.

She was a brave, resolute girl—as many of our maid-servants are, notwithstanding popular lament over their weaknesses; she did not sink into torpor, or run wild into temptation; she hoped on, she struggled on—best of all, she prayed much more than she had while her Sunday evenings were spent in Darch's company instead of at church. She shut her eyes, her ears, her whole understanding, to every attempt, direct or indirect, to convince her of his being anything

but a victim to envy and malice; and vowed to herself that whenever he returned, if she were but alive to see it, he should find one at least to bid him welcome who had never doubted him.

Her mother died, and the maintenance of her younger sister was left on her hands; she gave up her situation, taught herself dress-making, and took a room in one of the model lodging-houses that had been erected in David Forrest's parish, so that Lucy could go regularly to school. Here she worked harder than ever, year after year, sometimes prospering, sometimes in difficulty, but never flinching from her duty—from her trust in God's care, and her faithful reliance on the fidelity of poor Darch. Lucy, who throve and bloomed under her care—as London children do thrive, in spite of all that seems trying to prevent them—repaid her sister's tenderness by her ardent sympathy; and grew up as loyal a believer in Darch Williams as Grace herself. Her confidence had more than once cheered the elder's weary heart, and kept it from sickening with the hope deferred.

Time, as it passed on, had exercised its healing power, and Grace had not played a mother's part all these years without finding a mother's guerdon in her own love for the child who loved her so loyally. If Darch was the idol of her dreams, Lucy was that of her everyday life; and the vigilant watch she kept over that precious health was repaid as it deserved. Thanks to the arrangement of their lodging-house, their room could be kept wholesome and clean; they had smoke, of course, to contend with; but they had water, light, and air; and Grace's youthful education enabled her to perform what seemed wonders to their fellow-lodgers, over the little cooking stove. As she often said, those two years in the hotel kitchen had been the saving of them both. She taught Lucy cookery: and so much aptitude did Lucy display for this, as well as for the cleaning and scouring department of domestic service, that it had lately been a tender point in the elder's conscience whether she ought not to obtain her a good situation.

Grace had sat up late the night before, over some work that was to be sent home without delay; and, having rather overslept herself, was endeavouring to make up for lost time by extra speed, when Lucy, who had gone downstairs for water, came back in no small excitement, with her pitcher in one hand and a letter in the other.

"Here's something for breakfast! I am sure it is Miss Leicester's writing. Do be quick and let us know all about it, while I boil the kettle. I thought I never should get upstairs to bring it you; old Mr. Martin stopped me on the landing. One of us must go in, I saw that, and tidy up his place a bit. Now then, Grace, what's the news?"

"I am wanted in Greville Gardens about some work. There is the note for you. I wonder how often you will spell it over, instead of minding your proper business."

"She does write so nicely, and her paper is so pretty," sighed Lucy, apologetically. "A young lady staying with her—I wish it was me.

Do you know, Grace, Caterina told me yesterday that some of the ladies she knows, who are so grandly dressed now, were no better off to begin with than you or I. She means to be a rich one too, if she can only make a lucky hit. I wish we could."

"So long as we have work to do, and health to get through it, we have no call to be wishing for luck," said Grace, who was putting the last stitches into the fancy costume she had nearly finished over-night. "I don't hold by all Caterina says, Lucy; she talks too fast, and too much, I think."

"She doesn't mean to tell stories!" said Lucy, quickly.

"Not that, but she does not always stick to truth. That sort of life makes people less particular."

"Now, Grace, what do you mean by that?"

"Well, by what I've seen of them, they don't mind doing things that wouldn't suit me, or you either."

"One must have disagreeables, everywhere. If one only could be lucky enough to make a sensation, and get a good salary, wouldn't it be nice!"

"What has been putting this into your head, child?" asked the elder sister, in some alarm.

"Caterina did; she said I had just the figure and the face for them, and she would speak a good word for me if I liked it. I think I *should* like it, uncommonly. Look here"—whisking the skirt out of her sister's hands, and holding it before her—"Caterina told me all about it; she is to wear this as the Princess's faithful maid, who overhears all the bad people's secrets, and gets her mistress through all her troubles; and they laugh and clap whenever she comes on."

"Get the breakfast, darling, and I'll leave this with Caterina, as I go by. Perhaps you'll attend to Mr. Martin, as I may not be back in time."

"But you'll turn over what Caterina said, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll turn it over," said Grace, "and turn her over too, if she comes chattering in this way. You're not a bit the grander lady for wearing smart things, Lucy, just for a crowd to see you in, who don't care the next minute whether you're dead or alive. We can get our living as we are, and I know mother would never have allowed such thoughts."

"But, Grace, you always say one may do anything honest to earn one's bread, and Caterina is as honest as we are."

"I don't talk against Caterina—she has been brought up to the stage, and she may do her duty in it: but you haven't, and sha'n't be, that's more. I daresay it *is* a bit dull for you, dear, and I'll see what can be done about a change, if it's change you're wanting. I'll talk to Miss Leicester about it—she might hear of a nice place for you, in a nursery, maybe, where there'd be a pretty garden to play in with the children. You would like that, now?" added Grace, almost entreatingly, as she looked at the light form and pretty face, and felt that the

child had become a woman, and might any moment assert an independent will. Caterina had once given them tickets of admission to see the piece and pantomime in which she performed; and Lucy had raved about them ever since. Grace pondered over the whole matter, as she made her way to the nearest Metropolitan station, where she was to take the train for South Kensington.

"If anything happened to me, what would become of her, so young and so pretty as she is, and as innocent of what's wrong as a baby? If it's for her good to go away from me, why I must try and bear that as I've borne all the rest—with God's help. He has always helped me, though He has not given *him* back to me yet."

The voices of two men, descending the stone staircase behind her, disturbed this reverie: which, in fact, was rather distracting the poor workwoman from the business of the day.

"Not the first time you've been underground, Jones, is it?"

"I've been underground many a time, but not in a railway carriage," was the answer. "There's always some new dodge or other turning up. I wonder if it pays?"

The voices were lost in the noise of the coming train. As everyone knows, travelling by the underground rail admits of no hesitation or inactivity, and Grace Pyne ran with the rest of the world, and was in her third-class carriage before she had time to consider what it was that had made her heart beat so quickly.

It must have been her own fancy—she knew that quite well—but the voice of the second speaker had thrilled to her very heart. It was so strangely like the voice of Darch Williams!

Scolding herself inwardly, but palpitating in every fibre, she watched and waited till her destination was reached, and gazed in every direction: but in vain. There was no one like him anywhere, and Miss Leicester was waiting: so she stilled her sickening heart as best she might, and went meekly on to her day's labour.

How little did she know what that day was to bring forth!

(To be continued.)

OWEN, THE MILKMAN.

IT was a grand sea to-day: one of the grandest that we had seen at Saltwater. The waves were dancing and sparkling like silver; the blue of the sky was deeper than a painter's ultramarine. But to us, looking on it from Mrs. Blair's house in Seabord Terrace, its brightness and beauty were dimmed.

"For you see, Johnny," observed the Squire to me, his face and tone alike gloomy—outward things take their impress from the mind—"with that dreadful affair at the next door jaundicing one's thoughts, the sea might as well be grey as blue, and the sky lowering with thunder-clouds. I repeat that I don't like mysteries: they act on me like a fit of indigestion."

The affair just was a mystery; to us, as to all Saltwater. More than a week had elapsed since the Monday evening when it took place, and poor Jane Cross now lay buried in the windy graveyard. On this said Monday evening, the two servant maids, Jane Cross and Matilda Valentine (left in the house, No. 7, Seabord Terrace, during the absence of the family abroad), had been pursuing their ordinary occupations. While Jane Cross was laying the cloth for supper in the kitchen, Matilda went out to fetch the usual pint of ale. On her return she could not get in. When admittance was obtained, Jane Cross lay dead in the hall, having fallen down the well of the staircase. Evidences of a scuffle on the upper landing could be traced, making it apparent that the fall was not accidental; that she had been flung down. Some doubt attached to Owen, the milkman, partly from his previous intimacy with the girls, chiefly because he had been seen leaving the back door of the house somewhere about the time it must have occurred. What Owen said was, that he had rung twice at the door, but his ring was not answered.

Matilda was to be pitied. The two young women had cared a good deal for one another, and the shock to Matilda was serious. The girl, now staying in our house, had worn a half-dazed look since, and avoided No. 7 as though it had the plague. Superstition in regard to the house had already been rife in both the servants' minds, in consequence of the unhappy death in it of their master's son, Edmund Peahern, some weeks back: and if Matilda had been afraid of seeing one ghost before (as she had been) she would now undoubtedly expect to see two of them.

On this same morning, as I stood with the Squire looking at the sea from the drawing-room window of No. 6, Matilda came in. Her large dark eyes had lost their former sparkle, her clear olive skin its freshness. She asked leave to speak to Mrs. Todhetley: and the Mater—who sat at the table adding up some bills, for our sojourn at

Saltwater was drawing towards its close—told her, in a kind tone, to speak on.

"I am making bold to ask you, ma'am, whether you could help me to find a place in London," began Matilda, standing between the door and the table in her black dress. "I know, ma'am, you don't live in London, but a long way off it; Mrs. Blair has told me so, Master Johnny Ludlow also: but I thought perhaps you knew people there, and might be able to hear of something."

The Mater looked at Matilda without answering, and then round at us. Rather strange it was, a coincidence in a small way, that we had had a letter from London from Miss Deveen that morning, which had concluded with these lines of postscript: "Do you chance to know of any nice, capable young woman in want of a situation? One of my housemaids is going to leave."

Naturally this occurred to the Mater's mind when Matilda spoke. "What kind of situation do you wish for?" she asked.

"As housemaid, ma'am, or parlour-maid. I can do my duty well in either."

"But now, my girl," spoke up the Squire, turning from the window, "why need you leave Saltwater? You'd never like London after it. This is a clear, fresh, health-giving place, with beautiful sands and music on them all day; London is nothing but smoke and fogs."

Matilda shook her head. "I could not stay here, sir."

"Nonsense, girl. Of course what has happened *has* happened, and it's very distressing; and you, of all people, must feel it so: but you will forget it in time. If you don't care to go back to No. 7 before Mr. and Mrs. Peahern come home ——"

"I can never go back to No. 7, sir," she interrupted, a vehemence that seemed born of terror in her subdued voice. "Never in this world. I would rather die."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the Squire, impatiently. "There's nothing the matter with No. 7. What has happened in it won't happen again."

"It is an unlucky house, sir; a haunted house," she contended with suppressed emotion. "And it's true that I would rather die outright than go to live in it; for the terror of being there would slowly kill me. And so, ma'am," she added quickly to Mrs. Todhetley, evidently wishing to escape the subject, "I should like to go away altogether from Saltwater; and if you can help me to hear of a place in London, I shall be very grateful."

"I will consider of it, Matilda," was the answer. And when the girl had left the room the Mater asked us what we thought about recommending her to Miss Deveen. We saw no reason against it—not but what the Squire put the girl down as an idiot on the subject of haunted houses—and Miss Deveen was written to.

The upshot was, that on the next Saturday, Matilda bade farewell to Saltwater and departed for Miss Deveen's, the Squire sarcastically

assuring her that *that* house had no ghosts in it. We should be leaving, ourselves, the following Tuesday.

But, before that day came, it chanced that I saw Owen, the milkman. It was on the Sunday afternoor. I had taken little Joe Blair for a walk across the fields as far as Munpler (their Montpellier-by-Sea, you know), and in returning met Thomas Owen. He wore his black Sunday clothes, and looked a downright fine fellow, as usual. There was something about the man I could not help liking, in spite of the doubt attaching to him.

"So Matilda Valentine is gone, sir," he observed, after we had exchanged a few sentences.

"Yes, she went yesterday," I answered, putting my back against the field fence, while young Joe went careering about in chase of a yellow butterfly. "And for my part, I don't wonder at the girl's not liking to stay at Saltwater. At least, in Seabord Terrace."

"I was told this morning that Mr. and Mrs. Peahern were on their road home," he continued.

"Most likely they are. They'd naturally want to look into the affair for themselves."

"And I hope with all my heart they will be able to get some light out of it," returned Owen, warmly. "I mean to do *my* best to bring out the mystery, sir; and I sha'n't rest till it's done."

His words were fair, his tone was genuine. If it was indeed himself who had been the chief actor in the tragedy, he carried it off well. I hardly knew what to think. It is true I had taken a bit of a fancy to the man, according to my customary propensity to take a fancy, or the contrary; but I did not know much of him, and not anything of his antecedents. As he spoke to me now, his tone was marked, rather peculiar. It gave me a notion that he wanted to say more.

"Have you any idea that you will be able to trace it out?"

"For my own sake I should like to get the matter cleared up," he added, not directly answering my question. "People are beginning to turn the cold shoulder my way: one woman asked me to my face yesterday whether I did it. No, I told her, I did not do it, but I'd try and find out who did."

"You are sure you heard and saw nothing suspicious that night when you rang at the bell and could not get in, Owen?"

"Not then, sir; no. I saw no light in the house and heard no noise."

"You have not any clue to go by, then?"

"Not much, sir, yet. But I can't help thinking somebody else has."

"Who is that?"

"Matilda."

"Matilda!" I repeated, in amazement. "Surely you can't suspect that she—that she was a party to any deed so cruel and wicked!"

"No, no, sir, I don't mean that; the young women were too good

friends to harm one another: and whatever took place, took place while Matilda was out of the house. But I can't help fancying that she knows, or suspects, more of the matter than she will say. In short, that she is screening some one."

To me it seemed most unlikely. "Why do you judge so, Owen?"

"By her manner, sir. Not by much else. But I'll tell you something that I saw. On the previous Wednesday when I left the afternoon milk at that tall house just beyond Seabord Terrace, the family lodging there told me to call in the evening for the account, as they were leaving the next day. Accordingly I went; and was kept waiting so long before they paid me that it was all but night when I came out. Just as I was passing the back door at No. 7, it was suddenly drawn open from the inside, and a man stood in the opening, whispering with one of the girls. She was crying, for I heard her sobs, and he kissed her and came out, and the door was hastily shut. He was an ill-looking man; so far at least as his clothes went; very shabby. His face I did not see, for he pulled his slouching round hat well over his brows as he walked away rapidly, and the black beard he wore covered his mouth and chin."

"Which of the maids was it?"

"I don't know, sir. The next day I chaffed them a bit about it, but they both declared that nobody had been there but the watchmaker, Mr. Renninson, who goes every Wednesday to wind up the clocks, and that it must have been him that I saw, for he was late that evening. I said no more; it was no business of mine; but the man I saw go out was just about as much like Renninson as he was like me."

"And do you fancy ——"

"Please wait a minute, sir," he interrupted, "I haven't finished. Last Sunday evening, upon getting home after service, I found I had left my prayer-book in church. Not wishing to lose it, for it was the one my father always used, I went back for it. However, the church was shut, so I could not get in. It was a fine evening, and I took a stroll round the churchyard. In the corner of it, near to Mr. Edmund Peahern's tomb, they had buried poor Jane Cross but two days before—you know the spot, sir. Well, on the flat square of earth that covers her grave, stood Matilda Valentine, the greatest picture of distress you can imagine, tears streaming down her cheeks. She dried her eyes when she saw me, and we came away together. Naturally I fell to talking of Jane Cross and the death. 'I shall do as much as lies in my power to bring it to light,' I said to Matilda; 'or people may go on doubting me to the end. And I think the first step must be to find out who the man was that called in upon you the previous Wednesday night.' Well, sir, with that, instead of making any answering remark as a Christian would, or a rational being, let us say, Matilda gives a smothered, sobbing shriek, and darts away out of the churchyard. I couldn't make her out; and all in a minute a convic-

tion flashed over me, though I hardly know why, that she knew who was the author of the calamity, and was screening him; or at any rate that she had her suspicions, if she did not actually know. And I think so still, sir."

I shook my head, not seeing grounds to agree with Owen. He resumed:

"The next morning, between nine and ten, I was in the shop, putting a pint of cream which had been ordered into a can, when to my surprise Matilda walked in, cool and calm. She said she had come to tell me that the man I had seen leave the house was her brother. He had fallen into trouble through having become security for a fellow workman, had had all his things sold up, including his tools, and had walked every step of the way—thirty miles—to ask her if she could help him. She did help him as far as she could, giving him what little money she had by her, and Jane Cross had added ten shillings to it. He had got in only at dusk, she said, had taken some supper with them, and left again afterwards, and that she was letting him out at the gate when I must have been passing it. She did not see me, for her eyes were dim with crying: her heart felt like to break in saying farewell. That was the truth, she declared, and that her brother had had no more to do with Jane's death than she or I had; he was away again out of Saltwater the same night he came into it"

"Well? Did you not believe her?"

"No, sir," answered Owen, boldly. "I did not. If this was true, why should she have gone off into that smothered shriek in the churchyard when I mentioned him, and rush away in a fright?"

I could not tell. Owen's words set me thinking.

"I did not know which of the two girls it was who let the man out that Wednesday night, for I did not clearly see; but, sir, the impression on my mind at the moment was, that it was Jane Cross. Jane Cross, and not Matilda. If so, why does she tell me this tale about her brother, and say it was herself?"

"And if it was Jane Cross?"

Owen shook his head. "All sorts of notions occur to me, sir. Sometimes I fancy that the man might have been Jane's sweetheart, that he might have been there again on the Monday night, and done the mischief in a quarrel; and that Matilda is holding her tongue because it is her brother. Let the truth be what it will, Matilda's manner convinces me of one thing: that there's something she is concealing, and that it is half frightening her wits out of her.——You are going to leave Saltwater, I hear, sir," added the young man in a different tone, "and I am glad to have the opportunity of saying this, for I should not like you to carry away any doubt of me. I'll bring the matter to light if I can."

Touching his hat, he walked onwards, leaving my thoughts all in a whirligig.

Was Owen right in drawing these conclusions?—or was he pur-

posely giving a wrong colouring to facts, and seeking craftily to throw suspicion off himself? It was a nice question, one I could make neither top nor tail of. But, looking back to the fatal evening, weighing this point, sifting that, I began to see that Matilda showed more anxiety, more terror, than she need have shown *before* she knew that any ill had happened. Had she a prevision, as she stood at the door with the jug of ale in her hand, that some evil might have chanced? Did she leave some individual in the house with Jane Cross when she went to the Swan to get the ale?—and was it her brother? Did she leave OWEN in the house, and was she screening him?

"Why, Matilda! Is it you?"

It was fourteen months later, and autumn weather, and I had just arrived in London at Miss Deveen's. My question to Matilda, who came into my dressing-room with some warm water to wash off the travelling dust, was not made in surprise at seeing *her*, for I supposed she was still in service at Miss Deveen's, but at seeing the change in her. Instead of the healthy and, so to say, handsome girl known at Saltwater, I saw a worn, weary, anxious-looking shadow, with a feverish fire in her wild dark eyes.

"Have you been ill, Matilda?"

"No, sir, not at all. I am quite well."

"You have grown very thin."

"It's the London air, sir. I think everybody must get thin that lives in it."

Very civilly and respectfully, but yet with an unmistakable air of reticence, spoke she. Somehow the girl was changed, and greatly changed. Perhaps she had been grieving after Jane Cross? Perhaps the secret of what had happened (if in truth Matilda knew it) lay upon her with too heavy a weight?

"Do you find Matilda a good servant?" I asked of Miss Deveen, later, she and I being alone together.

"A very good servant, Johnny. But she is going to leave me."

"Is she? Why?"

Miss Deveen only nodded, in answer to the first query, passing over the last. I supposed she did not wish to say.

"I think her so much altered."

"In what way, Johnny?"

"In looks: looks and manner. She is just a shadow. One might say she had passed through a six months' fever. And what a curious light there is in her eyes!"

"She has always impressed me with the idea of having some great care upon her. None can mistake that she is a sorrowful woman. I hear that the other servants accuse her of having been 'crossed in love,'" added Miss Deveen, with a smile.

"She is thinner even than Miss Cattledon."

"And that, I daresay you think, need not be, Johnny! Miss

Cattledon, by the way, is rather hard upon Matilda just now: calls her a 'demon.'"

"A demon! Why does she?"

"Well, I'll tell you. Though it is but a little domestic matter, one that perhaps you will hardly care to hear. You must know (to begin with) that Matilda has never made herself sociable with the other servants here; in return they have become somewhat prejudiced against her, and have been ready to play her tricks, tease her, and what not. But you must understand, Johnny, that I knew nothing of the state of affairs below; such matters rarely reach me. My cook, Hall, was especially at war with Matilda: in fact, I believe there was no love lost between the two. The girl's melancholy—for at times she does seem very melancholy—was openly put down by the rest to the assumption that she must have had some love affair in which the swain had played her false. They were continually plaguing her on this score, and it no doubt irritated Matilda; but she rarely retorted, preferring rather to leave them and take refuge in her room."

"Why could they not let her alone?"

"People can't let one another alone, as I believe, Johnny. If they did, the world would be pleasanter to live in."

"And I suppose Matilda got tired at last, and gave warning?"

"No. Some two or three weeks back it appears that, by some means or other, Hall obtained access to a small trunk; one that Matilda keeps her treasures in, and has cautiously kept locked. If I thought Hall had opened this trunk with a key of her own, as Matilda accuses her of doing, I would not keep the woman in my house another day. But she declares to me most earnestly—for I had her before me here to question her—that Matilda, called suddenly out of her chamber, left the trunk open there, and the letter, of which I am about to tell you, lying, also open, by its side. Hall says that she went into the room—it adjoins her own—for something she wanted, and that all she did—and she admits this much—was to pick up the letter, carry it downstairs, read it to the other servants, and make fun over it."

"What letter was it?"

"Strictly speaking, it was only part of a letter: one begun but not concluded. It was in Matilda's own hand, apparently written a long while ago, for the ink was pale and faded, and it began 'Dearest Thomas Owen. The ——'"

"Thomas Owen!" I exclaimed, starting in my chair. "Why, that is the milkman at Saltwater."

"I'm sure I don't know who he is, Johnny, and I don't suppose it matters. Only a few lines followed, three or four, speaking of some private conversation that she had held with him on coming out of church the day before, and of some reproach that she had then made to him respecting Jane Cross. The words broke suddenly off there, as if the writer had been interrupted. But why Matilda did not

complete the letter and send it, and why she should have kept it by her all this while, must be best known to herself."

"Jane Cross was her fellow-servant at Mr. Peahern's. She who was killed by falling down the staircase."

"Yes, poor thing, I remembered the name. But, to go on. In the evening, after the finding of this letter, I and Miss Cattledon were startled by a disturbance in the kitchen. Cries and screams, and loud, passionate words. Miss Cattledon ran down; I stayed at the top of the stairs. She found Hall, Matilda, and one of the others there, Matilda in a perfect storm of fury, attacking Hall like a maniac. She tore handfuls out of her hair, she bit her thumb until her teeth met in it: Hall, though by far the bigger person of the two, and I should have thought the stronger, had no chance against her; she seemed to be as a very reed in her hands, passion enduing Matilda with a strength perfectly unnatural. George, who had been out on an errand, came in at the moment, and by his help the women were parted. Cattledon maintains that Matilda, during the scene, was nothing less than a demon; quite mad. When it was over, the girl fell on the floor utterly exhausted, and lay like a dead thing, every bit of strength, almost of life, gone out of her."

"I never could have believed it of Matilda."

"Nor I, Johnny. I grant that the girl had just cause to be angry. How should we like to have our private places rifled, and their contents exhibited to and mocked at by the world; contents which to us seem sacred? But to have put herself into that wild rage was both unseemly and unaccountable. Her state then, and her state immediately afterwards, made me think—I speak it with all reverence, Johnny—of the poor people in holy writ from whom the evil spirits were cast out."

"Ay. It seems to be just such a case, Miss Deveen."

"Hall's thumb was so much injured that a doctor had to come daily to it for nine or ten days," continued Miss Deveen. "Of course, after this climax, I could not retain Matilda in my service; neither would she have remained in it. She indulged a feeling of the most bitter hatred to the women servants, to Hall especially—she had not much liked them before, as you may readily guess—and she said that nothing would induce her to remain with them, even had I been willing to keep her. So she has obtained a situation with some acquaintances of mine who live in this neighbourhood, and goes to it next week. That is why Matilda leaves me, Johnny."

In my heart I could not help being sorry for her, and said so. She looked so truly, sadly unhappy!

"I am very sorry for her," assented Miss Deveen. "And had I known the others were making her life here uncomfortable, I should have taken means to stop their pastime. Of the actual facts, with regard to the letter, I cannot be at any certainty—I mean in my own mind. Hall is a respectable servant, and I have never had cause to

think her untruthful during the three years she has lived with me: and she most positively holds to it that the little trunk was standing open on the table and the letter lying open beside it. Allowing that it was so, she had, of course, no right to touch either trunk or letter, still less to take the letter downstairs and exhibit it to the others, and I don't defend her conduct: but yet it is different from having rifled the lock of the trunk and filched the letter out."

"And Matilda accuses her of doing that?"

"Yes: and, on her side, holds to it just as positively. What Matilda tells me is this: On that day it chanced that Miss Cattledon had paid the women servants their quarter's wages. Matilda carried hers to her chamber, took this said little trunk out of her large box, where she keeps it, unlocked it, and put the money into it. She disturbed nothing in the trunk; she says she had wrapt the sovereigns in a bit of paper, and she just slipped them inside, touching nothing else. She was shutting down the lid when she heard herself called to by me on the landing below. She waited to lock the box but not to put it up, leaving it standing on the table. I quite well remembered calling to the girl, having heard her run upstairs. I wanted her in my room."

Miss Deveen paused a minute, apparently thinking.

"Matilda has assured me again and again that she is quite sure she locked the little trunk, that there can be no mistake on that point. Moreover, she asserts that the letter in question was lying at the bottom of the trunk beneath other things, and that she had not taken it from thence or touched it for months and months."

"And when she went upstairs again—did she find the little trunk open or shut?"

"She says she found it shut: shut and locked just as she had left it; and she replaced it in her large box, unconscious that anybody had been to it."

"Was she long in your room, Miss Deveen?"

"Yes, Johnny, the best part of an hour. I wanted a little sewing done in a hurry, and told her to sit down there and then and do it. It was during this time that the cook, going upstairs herself, saw the trunk, and took the opportunity to do what she did do."

"I think I should feel inclined to believe Matilda. Her tale sounds the more probable."

"I don't know that, Johnny. I can hardly believe that a respectable woman, as Hall undoubtedly is, would deliberately unlock a fellow-servant's box with a false key. Whence did she get the key to do it? Had she previously provided herself with one? The lock is of the most simple description, for I have seen the trunk since, and Hall might possess a key that would readily fit it: but if so, as the woman herself says, how could she know it? In short, Johnny, it is one woman's word against another's: and, until this happened, I had deemed each of them to be equally credible."

To be sure there was reason in that. I sat thinking.

"Were it proved to have been as Matilda says, still I could not keep her," resumed Miss Deveen. Mine is a peaceable, well-ordered household, and I should not like to know that one, subject to insane fits of temper, was a member of it. Though Hall in that case would get her discharge also."

"Do the people where Matilda is going know why she leaves?"

"Mrs. and Miss Soames. Yes. I told them all about it. But I told them at the same time, what I had then learnt—that Matilda's temper had doubtlessly been much tried here. It would not be tried in their house, they believed, and took her readily. She is an excellent servant, Johnny, let who will get her."

I could not resist the temptation of speaking to Matilda about this, an opportunity offering that same day. She came into the room with some letters just left by the postman.

"I thought my mistress was here, sir," she said, hesitating with the tray in her hand.

"Miss Deveen will be here in a minute: you can leave the letters. So you are going to take flight, Matilda! I have heard all about it. What a silly thing you must be to put yourself into that wonderful tantrum!"

"She broke into my box, and turned over its contents, and stole my letter to mock me," retorted Matilda, her fever-lighted eyes taking a momentary fierceness. "Who, put in my place, would not have gone into a tantrum, sir?"

"But she says she did not break into it."

"As surely as that is heaven's sun above us, she *did it*, Mr. Johnny. She has been full of spite towards me for a long time, and she thought she would pay me out. I did but unlock the box, and slip the little paper of money in, and I locked it again instantly and brought the key away with me: I can never say anything truer than that, sir: to make a mistake about it is not possible."

No pen could convey the solemn earnestness with which she spoke. Somehow it impressed me. I hoped Hall would get served out.

"Yes, the wrong has triumphed for once. As far as I can see, sir, it often does triumph. Miss Deveen thinks great things of Hall, but she is deceived in her; and I daresay she will find her out sometime. It was Hall who ought to have been turned away instead of me. Not that I would stay here longer if I could."

"But you like Miss Deveen?"

"Very much indeed, sir; she is a good lady and a kind mistress. She spoke very well indeed of me to the new family where I am going, and I daresay I shall do well enough there.—Have you been to Saltwater lately, sir?" she added, abruptly.

"Never since. Do you get news from the place?"

She shook her head. "I have never heard a word from any

soul in it. I have written to nobody, and nobody has written to me."

"And nothing more has come out about poor Jane Cross. It is still a mystery."

"And likely to be one," she replied, in a low tone.

"Perhaps so. Do you know what Owen the milkman thought?"

She had been speaking the last sentence or two with her eyes bent, fiddling with the silver waiter. Now they were raised quickly.

"Owen thought that you could clear up the mystery if you liked, Matilda. At least, that you possessed some clue to it. He told me so."

"Owen as good as said the same to me before I left," she replied, after a pause. "He is wrong, sir: but he must think it if he will. Is he—is he at Saltwater still?"

"For all I know to the contrary. This letter, that the servants here got at, was one you were beginning to write to Owen. Did ——"

"I would rather not talk of that letter, Mr. Johnny: my private affairs concern myself only," she interrupted—and went out of the room like a shot.

Had anyone told me that during this short visit of mine in London I should fall across the solution of the mystery of that tragedy enacted at No. 7, I might have been slow to credit it. Nevertheless, it was to be so.

Have you ever noticed, in going through life, that events seem to carry a sequence in themselves almost as though they bore in their own hands the guiding thread that connects them from beginning to end? For a time this thread will seem to be lost; to lie dormant, as though it had snapped, and the course of affairs it was holding to have disappeared for good. But lo! up peeps a little end when least expected, and we catch hold of it, and soon it grows into a handful; and what we had thought lost is again full of activity, and gradually works itself out. Not a single syllable, good or bad, had we heard of that calamity at Saltwater during the fourteen months which had passed since. The thread of it lay dormant. At Miss Deveen's it began to steal up again: Matilda, and her passion, and the letter she had commenced to Thomas Owen were to the fore: and before that visit of mine came to an end, the thread had, strange to say, unwound itself.

I was a favourite of Miss Deveen's: you may have gathered that from past papers. One day, when she was going shopping, she asked me to accompany her and not Miss Cattledon: which made that rejected lady's face all the more like vinegar. So we set off in the carriage.

"Are we going to Regent Street, Miss Deveen."

"Not to-day, Johnny. I like to encourage my neighbouring tradespeople, and shall buy my new silk here. We have excellent shops not far off."

After a few intricate turnings and windings, the carriage stopped before a large linendraper's, which stood amidst a colony of shops nearly a mile from Miss Deveen's. George came round to open the door.

"Now what will you do, Johnny?" said Miss Deveen. "I daresay I shall be half an hour in here, looking at silks and calico; and I won't inflict that penalty on you. Shall the carriage take you for a short drive the while, or will you wait in it?—or walk about?"

"I will wait in the street here," I said, "and come in to you when I am tired. I like looking at shops." And I do like it.

The next shop to the linendraper's was a carver and gilder's: he had some nice pictures displayed in his window; at any rate, they looked nice to me: and there I took up my station to begin with.

"How do you do, sir? Have you forgotten me?"

The words came from a young man who stood at the next door, close to me, causing me to turn quickly to him from my gaze at the pictures. No, I had not forgotten him. I knew him instantly. It was Owen, the milkman.

After a few words had passed, I went inside. It was a spacious shop, well fitted up with cans and things pertaining to a milkman's business. The window-board was prettily set off with moss, ferns, a bowl containing gold and silver fish, a miniature fountain, and a rush basket of fresh eggs. Over the door was his own name, Thomas Owen.

"You are living here, Owen?"

"Yes, sir."

"But why have you left Saltwater?"

"Because, Mr. Johnny, the place looked askance at me. People, in their own minds, set down that miserable affair at No. 7 to my credit. Once or twice I was hooted at by the street boys, asking what I had done with Jane Cross. My mother couldn't stand that, and I couldn't stand it, so we just sold our business at Saltwater, and bought this one here. And a good change it has been, in a pecuniary point of view: this is an excellent connection, and grows larger every day."

"I'm sure I am glad to hear it."

"At first, mother couldn't bear London: she longed for the pure country air and the green fields: but she is reconciled to it now. Perhaps she'll have an opportunity soon of going back to see her own old Welsh mountains, and of staying there if it pleases her."

"Then I should say you are going to be married, Owen."

He laughed and nodded. "You'll wish me good luck, won't you, sir? She's the only daughter at the next door, the grocer's."

"That I will. Have you discovered any more of that mysterious business, Owen?"

"At Saltwater? No, sir: not anything at all that could touch the matter itself. But I have heard a good bit that bears upon it."

"Do you still suspect that Matilda could tell if she chose?"

"I suspect more than that, sir?"

The man's words were curiously significant. He had a bit of fern in his hand, and his fresh, open, intelligent face was bent downwards, as if he wanted to see what the leaf was made of.

"I am not sure, sir. It is but suspicion at the best: but it's an uncommonly strong one."

"Won't you tell me what you mean? You may trust me."

"Yes, I am sure I may," he said, promptly. "And I think I will tell you—though I have never breathed it to mortal yet. I think Matilda did it herself."

Backing away from the counter in my surprise, I upset an empty milk-can.

"Matilda!" I exclaimed, picking up the can.

"Mr. Johnny, with all my heart I believe it to have been so. I have believed it for some time now."

"But the girls were too friendly to harm one another. I remember you said so yourself, Owen."

"And I thought so then, sir. No suspicion of Matilda had occurred to me, but rather of the man I had seen there on the Wednesday. I think she must have done it in a sudden passion; not of deliberate purpose."

"But now, what are your reasons?"

"I told you, sir, as I daresay you can recal to mind, that I should do what lay in my power to unravel the mystery—for it was not at all agreeable to have it laid at my door. I began, naturally, with tracing out the doings of that night as connected with No. 7. Poor Jane Cross had not been out of doors that night, and so far as I knew had spoken to no one, save to me from the window; therefore of her there seemed nothing to be traced: but of Matilda there was. Inquiring here and there, I, bit by bit, got a few odds and ends of facts together. I traced out the exact time, almost to a minute, that I rang twice at the door-bell at No. 7, and was not answered; and the time that Matilda entered the Swan to get the supper beer. Pretty nearly half an hour had elapsed between the first time and the second."

"Half an hour!"

"Not far short of it. Which proved that Matilda must have been indoors when I rang, though she denied it before the coroner, and it was taken for granted that I had rung during her absence to fetch the beer. And you knew, sir, that her absence did not exceed ten minutes. Now why did not Matilda answer my ring? Why did she not candidly say that she had heard the ring, but did not choose to answer it? Well, sir, that gave rise to the first faint doubt of her: and when I recalled and dwelt on her singular manner, it appeared to me that the doubt might pass into grave suspicion. Look at her superstitious horror of No. 7. She never would go into the house afterwards!"

I nodded.

"Two or three other little things struck me, all tending to strengthen

my doubts, but perhaps they are hardly worth naming. Still, make the worst of it, it was only suspicion, not certainty, and I left Saltwater, holding my tongue."

"And is this all, Owen?"

"Not quite, sir. Would you be so good as to step outside, and just look at the name over the grocer's door?"

I did so, and read Valentine. "John Valentine." The same name as Matilda's.

"Yes, sir, it is," Owen said, in answer to me. "After settling here we made acquaintance with the Valentines, and by and by learnt that they are cousins of Matilda's. Fanny—my wife that is to be—has often talked to me about Matilda; they were together a good bit in early life; and by dint of mentally sifting what she said, and putting that and that together, I fancy I see daylight."

"Yes. Well?"

"Matilda's father married a Spanish woman. She was of a wild, ungovernable temper, subject to fits of frenzy; in one of which fits she died. Matilda has inherited this temper; she is liable to go into frenzies that can only be compared to insanity. Fanny has seen her in two only; they occur but at rare intervals; and she tells me that she truly believes the girl is mad—mad, Mr. Johnny—during the few minutes that they last."

The history I had heard of her mad rage at Miss Deveen's flashed over me. Temporarily insane they had thought her there.

"I said to Fanny one day when we were talking of her," resumed Owen, "that a person in that sort of uncontrollable passion, might commit any crime; a murder, or what not. 'Yes,' Fanny replied, 'and not unlikely to do it, either: Matilda has more than once said that she should never die in her bed.' Meaning——"

"Meaning what?" I asked, for he came to a pause.

"Well, sir, meaning, I suppose, that she might sometime lay violent hands upon herself, or upon another. I can't help thinking that something must have put her into one of these rages with Jane Cross, and that she pushed or flung the poor girl over the stairs."

Looking back, rapidly recalling signs and tokens, I thought it might have been so. Owen interrupted me.

"I shall come across her sometime, Mr. Johnny. These are things that don't hide themselves for ever: at least, not often. And I shall tax her with it to her face."

"But—don't you know where she is?"

"No, I don't, sir. I wish I did. It was said that she came up to take a situation in London, and perhaps she is still in it. But London's a large place, I don't know what part of it she was in, and one might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay. The Valentines have never heard of her at all since she was at Saltwater."

How strange it seemed;—that she and they were living so near one another, and yet not to be aware of it. Should I tell Owen? Only

for half a moment did the question cross me. *No:* most certainly not. It might be as he suspected; and, with it all, I could only pity Matilda. Of all unhappy women, she seemed the unhappiest.

Miss Deveen's carriage bowled past the door to take her up at the linendraper's. Wishing Owen good-day, I was going out, but drew back to make room for two people who were entering: an elderly woman in a close bonnet, and a young one with a fair, pretty, and laughing face.

"My mother and Fanny, sir," he whispered.

"She is very pretty, very nice, Owen," I said, impulsively. "You'll be sure to be happy with her."

"Thank you, sir; I think I shall. I wish you had spoken a word or two to her, Mr. Johnny: you'd have seen how nice she is."

"I can't stay now, Owen. I'll come again."

Not even to Miss Deveen did I speak of what I had heard. I kept thinking of it as we drove round Hyde Park, and she told me I was unusually silent.

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The thread was unwinding itself more and more. Once it had set on a lengthening, I suppose it could not stop. Accident led to an encounter between Matilda and Thomas Owen. Accident? No, it was this same thread of destiny. There's no such thing as accident in the world.

During the visit to the linendraper's, above spoken of, Miss Deveen bought a gown for Matilda. Feeling in her own heart sorry for the girl, thinking she had been somewhat hardly done by in her house, what with Hall and the rest of them, she wished to make her a present on leaving, as a token of her good-will. But the quantity of stuff bought proved not to be sufficient: Miss Deveen had had her doubts upon the point when it was cut off, and she told Matilda to go herself and get two yards more. This it was, this simple incident, that led to the meeting with Owen. And I was present at it.

The money-order office of the district was situated amidst this colony of shops. In going down there one afternoon to cash an order, I overtook Matilda. She was on her way to buy the additional yards of stuff.

"I suppose I am going right, sir?" she said to me. "I don't know much about this neighbourhood."

"Not know much about it! What, after having lived in it more than a year!"

"I have hardly ever gone out; except to church on a Sunday," she answered. "And what few articles I've wanted in the dress line, I have mostly bought at the little draper's shop round the corner."

Hardly had the words left her lips, when we came face to face with Thomas Owen. Matilda gave a kind of smothered cry, and stood stock still, gazing at him. What they said to one another in that first

moment, I did not hear. Matilda had a scared look, and was whiter than death. Presently we were all walking together towards Thomas Owen's, he having invited Matilda to go and see his home.

But there was another encounter first. Standing at the grocer's door was pretty Fanny Valentine. She and Matilda recognised each other, and clasped hands. It appeared to me that Matilda did it with suppressed reluctance, as though it gave her no pleasure to meet her relatives. She must have known how near they lived to Miss Deveen's, and yet she had never sought them out. Perhaps the very fact of not wishing to see them had kept her from the spot.

They all sat down in the parlour behind the shop—a neat room. Mrs. Owen was out; her son produced some wine. I stood up by the bookcase, telling them I must be off the next minute to the post-office. But the minutes passed, and I stayed on.

How he led up to it, I hardly know; but, before I was prepared for anything of the kind, Thomas Owen had plunged wholesale into the subject of Jane Cross, recounting the history of that night, in all its minute details, to Fanny Valentine. Matilda, sitting back on the far side of the room in an arm-chair, looked terror-stricken: her face seemed to be turning into stone.

"Why do you begin about that, Thomas Owen?" she demanded, when words at length came to her. "It can have nothing to do with Fanny."

"I have been wishing to tell it her for some little time, and this seems to be a fitting opportunity," he answered, coolly resolute. "You, being better acquainted with the matter than I, can correct me if I make any blunders. I don't care to keep secrets from Fanny: she is going to be my wife."

Matilda's hands lifted themselves with a convulsive movement and fell again. Her eyes flashed fire.

"*Your wife?*"

"If you have no objection," he replied. "My dear old mother goes into Wales next month, and Fanny comes here in her place."

With a cry, faint and mournful as that of a wounded dove, Matilda put her hands before her face and leaned back in her chair. If she had in truth loved Thomas Owen, if she loved him still, the announcement must have caused her cruel pain.

He resumed his narrative; assuming as facts what he had in his own mind conceived to have been the case, and by implication, but not directly, charging Matilda with the crime. It had a dreadful effect upon her; her agitation increased with every word. Suddenly she rose up in the chair, her arms lifted, her face distorted. One of those fits of passion had come on.

We had a dreadful scene. Owen was powerful, I of not much good, but we could not hold her. Fanny ran sobbing into her own door and sent in two of the shopmen.

It was the climax in Matilda Valentine's life. One that perhaps might have been always looked for. From that hour she was an insane

woman, her ravings being interspersed with lucid intervals. During one of these, she disclosed the truth.

She had loved Thomas Owen with a passionate love. Mistaking the gossip and the nonsense that the young man was fond of chattering to her and Jane Cross, she believed her love was returned. On the day preceding the tragedy, when talking with him after morning service, she had taxed him with paying more attention to Jane Cross than to herself. Not a bit of it, he had lightly answered; he would take her for a walk by the sea-shore that evening if she liked to go. But, whether he had meant it, or not, he never came, though Matilda dressed herself to be in readiness. On the contrary, he went to church, met Jane there, and walked the best part of the way home with her. Matilda jealously resented this; her mind was in a chaos; she began to suspect that it was Jane Cross he liked, not herself. She said a word or two upon the subject to Jane Cross on the next day, Monday; but Jane made sport of it—laughed it off. So the time went on to the evening, when they were upstairs together, Jane sewing, Matilda writing. Suddenly Jane Cross said that Thomas Owen was coming along, and Matilda ran to the window. They spoke to him as he passed, and he said he would look in as he returned from Munpler. After Matilda's letter to her brother was finished, she began a note to Thomas Owen, intending to reproach him with not keeping his promise to her and for joining Jane Cross instead. It was the first time she had ever attempted to write to him; and she stuck her work-box with the lid open behind the sheet of paper that Jane Cross might not see what she was doing. When it got dusk, Jane Cross remarked that it was blind man's holiday and that she would go on down and put the supper. In crossing the room, work-basket in hand, she passed behind Matilda, glanced at her letter, and saw the first words of it, "Dearest Thomas Owen." In sport, she snatched it up, read the rest where her own name was mentioned, and laughingly began, probably out of pure fun, to plague Matilda. "Thomas Owen your sweetheart!" she cried, running out on the landing. "Why, he is mine. He cares more for my little finger than for ——" Poor girl! She never finished her sentence. Matilda, fallen into one of those desperate fits of passion, had caught her up and was clutching her like a tiger-cat, tearing her hair, tearing pieces out of her gown. The scuffle was but brief: almost in an instant Jane Cross was falling headlong down the well of the staircase, pushed over the very low balustrades by Matilda, who threw the work-basket after her.

The catastrophe sobered her passion. For a while she lay on the landing in a sort of faint, all strength and power taken out of her as usual by the frenzy. Then she went down to look after Jane Cross.

Jane was dead. Matilda, not unacquainted with the aspect of death, saw that at once, and her senses pretty nearly deserted her again with remorse and horror. She had never thought to kill Jane

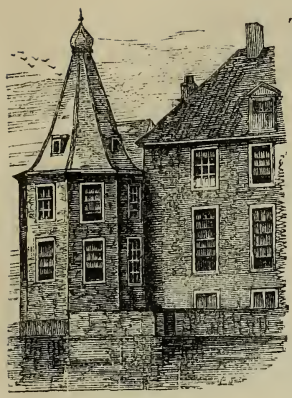
Cross, hardly to harm her, she liked her too well: but in those moments of frenzy she had not the slightest control over her actions. Her first act was to run and lock the side door in the garden wall, lest anyone should come in. How she lived through the next half hour, she never knew. Her superstitious fear of seeing the dead Edmund Peahern in the house was strong—and now there was another one! But, with all her anguish and her fear, the instinct of self-preservation was making itself heard. What must she do? How could she throw the suspicion off herself? She could not run out of the house and say, "Jane Cross has fallen accidentally over the stairs; come and look to her"—for no one would have believed it to be an accident. And there were the pieces, too, she had clutched out of the gown! While thus deliberating, the gate bell rang, putting her into a state of the most intense terror. It rang again. Trembling, panting, Matilda stood cowering in the kitchen, but it did not ring a third time. This was, of course, Thomas Owen.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Something she *must* do, and her brain hastily concocted the plan she should adopt. Putting the cloth and the bread-and-cheese on the table, she took the jug and went out at the front door to fetch the usual pint of ale. A moment or two she stood at the front door, peering up and down the road to make sure that no one was passing. Then she slipped out, locking the door softly; and, carrying the key concealed in the hollow of her hand, she threw it amidst the shrubs at No. 1. *Now* she could not get into the house herself; she would not have entered it alone for the world: people must break it open. All along the way to the post-office, to which she really did go, and then to the Swan, she was mentally rehearsing her tale. And it succeeded in deceiving us all, as the reader knows. With regard to the visit of her brother on the Wednesday, she had told Thomas Owen the strict truth; though, when he first alluded to it in the churchyard, her feelings were wrought up to such a pitch that she could only cry out and escape. But how poor Matilda contrived to live on and carry out her invented story, how she bore the inward distress and repentance that lay upon her, we shall never know. A distress, remorse, repentance that never quitted her, night or day; and which no doubt contributed to gradually unhinge her mind, and to throw it finally off its balance.

Such was the true history of the affair at No. 7, which had been so great a mystery to Saltwater. The truth was never made public, save to the very few who were specially interested in it. Matilda Valentine is in the asylum, and likely to remain there for life; while Thomas Owen and his wife flourish in sunshine, happy as a summer's day.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THROUGH HOLLAND.



THE HAGUE.

TRAVELLING in Holland is a very different matter from travelling in other countries. Rather it gives one the impression of *playing* at travelling, than of doing the thing in earnest. If the country is not picturesque, at least there is not a great deal of it: notwithstanding the Dutch by their drainage and ingenuity are endeavouring to rectify this deficiency as far as lies in their power. Holland was never made for a tribe of giants: it would accord better with the requirements of a Lilliputian race. It is difficult to realize at first that a country of so much bygone and historical importance should be so small. The first idea in the mind is of amazement on hearing that from one of its towers you can see at a glance the whole of Holland, and a great deal more besides. In going about, therefore, travelling becomes the least important consideration in one's plans, and the least costly.

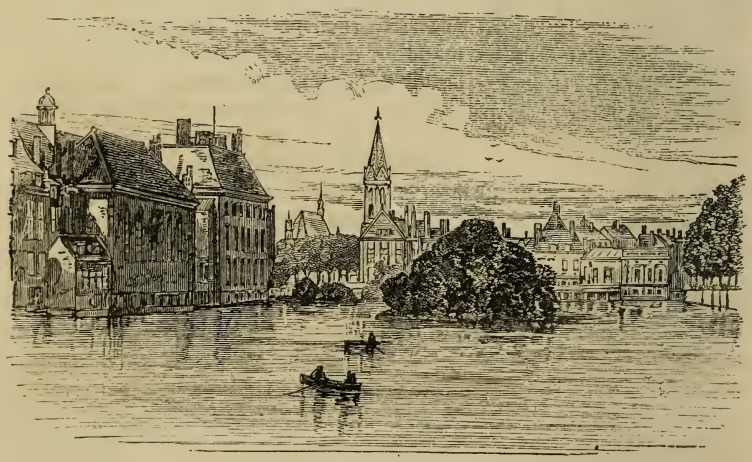
On some of the lines return tickets are almost the same price as the single. But the traveller should make himself thoroughly conversant with the current money of the realm: either before arrival, or immediately after. This is a matter of some moment; one that will prevent loss, confusion, or wilful errors on the part of the Dutch towards foreigners. When taking a railway ticket it enabled me in several instances to detect an endeavour to give me short change. On one of these occasions the amount subtracted was not less than two gulden, a sum equivalent to 3*s*. 4*d*. English money. This is a feature unhappily not confined to Holland.

Travelling by rail in Holland is a safe and easy matter. Their expresses about equal in speed our ordinary trains. Their slow trains have no parallel in this country: perhaps in no other. It is almost as if they wished to cheat the people into a belief that their country was a very large one, and required an immense amount of time to traverse. They crawl; they make long stoppages; during which periods the officials of the train and station, high and low, fraternize together over sundry glasses of beer, and enter into interesting arguments respecting things in general, and the quality of their beverage in particular.

At every few stations a halt of ten minutes or a quarter of an hour is organized. Then all the passengers rush out of their carriages in an apparently frantic and famished state, and with very un-Dutch-like

phlegmatism clamour for rolls and cheese, which they devour with very Dutch-like appetite. I have seen ladies dressed in the height of fashion and elegance go up to a refreshment counter and receive this delicacy with as much satisfaction as we should welcome a consignment of ambrosia and nectar.

This refection can scarcely be termed bread-and-cheese. It is rather bread flavoured with the article. If you ask for it they bring a roll cut in halves, with thin, transparent slices or shavings of cheese placed upon them. It is the universal custom of the country; apparently they have no idea of cutting their cheese in thick, sensible, English-like squares. It looked so untempting that I never once during my stay in Holland ventured upon the staple article of production for which Holland is famous.



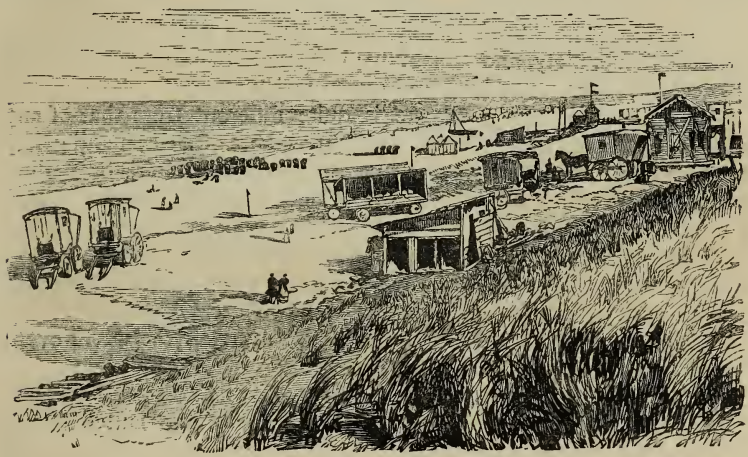
The Hague.

"We are celebrated for only two articles of manufacture," said a Dutchman to me one morning—"cheese and schiedam." This seems to be a recognized fact. It is difficult to imagine what they would do without their cheeses; both as an article for home consumption and for export. One thing about them was singular: they were dearer in Holland than they are in England. No one, therefore, need trouble himself to return home with a cargo of cheeses as a specimen of Dutch art or manufacture. A cargo of schiedam, on the other hand, will be a matter for individual taste and desire. Poodles are the delight of ladies for their ugliness, and schiedam may possess charms for its noxious flavour. Let the reader imagine whiskey distilled into a spirit a hundredfold more unpalatable than itself, and he will arrive at the given flavour of schiedam. The very sound of the name is suggestive.

We left Rotterdam for the Hague on Saturday morning by the 11.45 train, taking the route by way of Gouda. I now felt that my

first experience of the interior of the country was about to commence. I had no visions of happy valleys and snowy mountains, and was not disappointed. We passed through a succession of flat green fields, intersected by dykes. These dykes cut the fields into squares and divide them, just as our hedges do our own pastures in England. The dykes may almost be called water-hedges. They are the most important institution in Holland, without which the country would be nowhere. They vary in width and length according to the necessity for drainage, and in some parts—towards the Helder, for instance, on the one side, and Friesland on the other—rise to the dignity of canals.

The most conspicuous objects in the landscape were stunted trees and cattle. But there was no variety in the latter. They were all cows. And they were all black and white. A red cow was the



SCHEVENINGEN.

utmost rarity. Where one was discovered, the dusky kine held themselves aloof, and treated it as a black sheep—proving that the same rule holds good very much with cows as with human beings: and that it is as difficult for the one to form a just estimate of themselves as for the other.

The green of the grass was of so exquisite a tone that it deserves the dignity of a fresh paragraph in recording. Not a vestige of a hill or the slightest rising ground was anywhere visible. But the velvety pasture, and the peculiar and unfamiliar aspect of the country, redeemed the monotonous sameness from tediousness. Windmills especially abounded, and from the Gouda station we counted a small army of them in the distant landscape.

At one o'clock we reached the Hague—'s Gravenhage as the Dutch write it. It was at one time distinguished as "the richest village in the world;" but when Napoleon became King of Holland, and passed so many insulting remarks upon a country he nevertheless con-

descended to hold, he converted the Hague to the rank of a city. Up to the commencement of the present century it neither returned members nor possessed a corporation.

The Hague is the most fashionable, the handsomest, and the most modern-looking town in Holland. It is the residence of the Court. Here the king has his palace within the town, and the queen her palace in the woods. The latter is reached by a short but delightful drive, amidst trees which shelter you from the glare of sunshine. It is not a large house, and it is built after a very straggling style of architecture; but the portion inhabited by the queen is fitted up with an exquisite taste and refinement that eclipses many palaces of far greater pretensions to gorgeousness and grandeur. One of the few pictures in the Japanese salon was a portrait of Motley, showing a refined, intellectual face, but scarcely doing justice to the expression of the eyes. The queen is universally beloved and reverenced for her great virtue, piety, and amiability; but she lives a somewhat retired and secluded life. The king and queen rarely meet.

The appearance of the Hague is quite different from that of any other town in Holland. There is an atmosphere of fashion and gaiety about its broad, well-built streets suggestive of a small Paris or Berlin; an atmosphere which the presence of a Court invariably confers. Signs of wealth, too, are manifold. Fashionable equipages abound, as well appointed as any to be found in Hyde Park during the London season. Ladies dress as luxuriously as those of Paris: and possibly the small rivalries and jealousies that reign in the two great capitals are not absent here. Human nature is much the same all the world over; and like cases bring forth similar results.

One of the chief attractions of the Hague is its admirable picture-gallery, containing some of the finest examples of the Dutch school to be met with in the wide world. Paul Potter's famous Bull is once more here in safe possession. It was carried away to the Louvre, and kept there a considerable time as one of its greatest attractions. It is a picture great in size and stupendous in execution, faithful to the very life. One wonders at the amazing vigour possessed by so young a man; a man, too, whose constitution yielded to consumption before he had reached his thirtieth year. In the firm set of the lips, and the general outline of the profile, as seen in his bust, there is something which reminds one slightly of Gustave Doré. There are few who have not seen or heard of Paul Potter's Bull, for it has been reproduced in oleographs and engravings without number.

The evening of our arrival, after the table d'hôte, we took the tramway to Scheveningen, the fashionable and only watering-place possessed by the Dutch. It is consequently much patronized, and, having no rival, is an expensive place to visit.

The drive from the Hague to Scheveningen is one of the pleasantest in Holland, and lies partly through a wood. Towards the end of the drive you pass through the picturesque village of

Scheveningen, and note equally picturesque and much more interesting groups of fishwomen and shrimpers, with their short, coquettish petticoats, and well-made, sturdy limbs.

To-night all this could only be imagined. It was dark and somewhat cold, and the wind was blowing sharply from the east. The wood through which we passed was sombre and ghostly enough to put to flight any romantic ideas that might be lurking in the mind. The village was partially lighted, and from the cabarets there issued forth streams of light and laughter and noisy uproar. Schiedam has its votaries.

The tram went onwards, and soon reached its destination. We passed up the steps and under the arcades, and here found the handsomest and most attractive shops in Holland. All kinds of beautiful and artistic wares were exposed for sale, but none of them, it is needless to say, were Dutch. All were from foreign countries, and not a few from that most industrious, most ingenious of towns, Vienna.

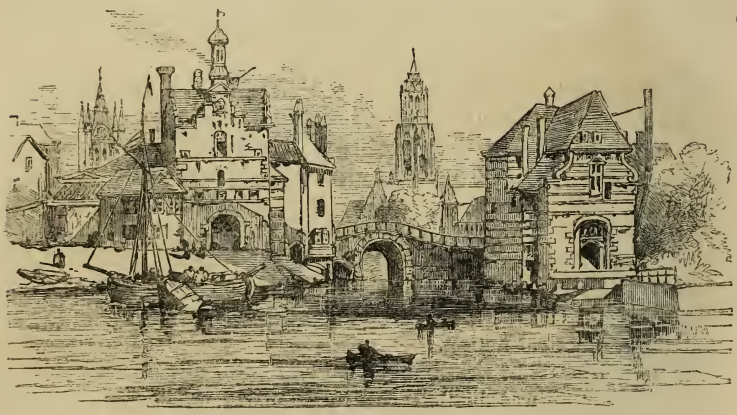
We soon reached the hotel and établissement: a combination of two very necessary institutions at the sea-side. In front of the hotel, and facing the sea, were innumerable seats and small tables; and in a pavilion erected for the purpose a brass band was doing its best to enliven the distinguished assembly. It was without doubt the best band we heard in Holland. The Dutch, whatever their talents, are certainly not born musicians. The art is but little cultivated and understood amongst them; rarely brought to perfection. Like England, they possess no composer of real genius. They are essentially a practical nation.

Although the night was boisterous and cold, the large space in front of the hotel was lighted up and crowded with visitors. Some were promenading with a vigour that seemed to argue of penance. Here and there a couple of slender experience, and, for the moment, absolutely devoid of sense, were enjoying the first fruits of a deep flirtation; proving to demonstration that the old story is the old story still, ever new, and universal in its application. Many were seated at tables, smoking, and drinking Schiedam, beer, or curaçao. The waiters were rushing frantically about in white aprons and bare heads; and as the wind treated their hair with scant ceremony, they looked like men undergoing the tortures of a perpetual electric shock, or suffering from the horrors of an ever present and appalling apparition. Their appearance was ludicrous in the extreme.

We left this noise and bustle, this busy crowd of idlers, and sauntered to the water's edge. The sea was roaring and rushing up in great waves. Upon the sands were a number of strange and weird looking objects that strongly resembled immense nuns, cloaked and hooded: here a row of them, there a group. One almost expected to see them filing off, one by one, with sheltered lanterns, and in a ghostly procession disappear into the dark night. These phenomena

were most puzzling, until a closer inspection put romance to flight, and revealed them as nothing more than large wicker-work chairs lined inside and out with a species of waterproof cloth, so that the occupant, by turning them from the wind, might sit sheltered and calm during the most boisterous gale.

Between Scheveningen and the Hague are some of the embankments: triumphs of skill, for which Holland is famous, and which are necessary to its very existence. So seemed they indeed to-night, as the sea came rolling in heavily, and in the darkness looked a black, shuddering, appalling waste of waters: a cruel, uncompromising, remorseless enemy. At our feet the surge broke in white angry foam, that came crawling rapidly over the sands, as if it thirsted to reclaim its own.



DELFT.

Scheveningen seemed to us that night all very well for those who possessed no other watering-place; a pleasant sojourn, possibly, for all who could make up large parties, and recruit health and nerves during the warm months of the year and beneath summer skies. But under any other circumstance the place promised to be dull and dreary enough, with little to attract the solitary visitor. So we argued to-night; and when the musicians cut short their programme and dispersed: the signal for many of the audience to do likewise: we quietly strolled back through the arcades, admired the brilliant shops anew, and took a returning tram to the Hague.

There arrived, we dived through the town into the market. What a scene! What a crowd! What a veritable Dante's Inferno! Had all the madmen in Bedlam turned out in a body, set up stall-keeping, and shouted at the very pitch of their voices, they could scarcely have made a noise greater or more maniacal. Booths and stalls of every description were erected in all parts of the market-place. The

vendors were bawling and clamouring, and praising up their wares one against another.

And here, en passant, it may be remarked that one of the most unpleasant characteristics of the Dutch lower orders is their voice. Nothing can be more unmusical, more harsh, more grating: nothing more repelling. At times it drove me almost into a state of fine frenzy. Even the small children running about the streets have voices so shrill and powerful that they terrify the very hairs of your head into an erect protest against them. To have to live with a voice of this description would be to die insane. Oh, the charm of a soft sweet voice! of tones more persuasive than the most powerful argument: tones that will almost persuade you against your reason and

LEYDEN.

common sense! Who knows it not, dwells with it not, is indeed to be pitied. But oh! the horrors of le revers de la médaille!

The crowd to-night was very busy. From many of the booths lighted flambeaux flared and smoked, and threw lurid and ghastly glares upon the surrounding customers: so that here a grinning face, all eyes and mouth, pleased at a supposed bargain, and there a dark face all frown and forehead, at having missed its purchase, looked positively fiendish; a ghoul; a satyr. With the surrounding, unceasing shrieks and cries and yells of the sellers, what wonder that terrible thoughts flitted through the mind, and that we fancied ourselves in a veritable Pandemonium?

The most popular stalls seemed to be those of the dried eels—unctuous, horrible-looking preparations—and of the hard-boiled eggs. There were old book-stalls, fruit-stalls, brass and copper stalls—stalls of every description. But the only beautiful—and really beautiful they were—were the vegetable-stalls. These were most picturesquely and artistically arranged, as the reader may have seen them in Italy: but

as they are never seen in our own prosaic clime. This was a feature not only at the Hague, but throughout Holland. Only they who have noted them can realize that a vegetable-stall affords scope for the display of skill and taste, and can be made to look in its way as beautiful, as satisfying to the eye, as a stall of rare and cultivated flowers.

That night I had visions of Bedlams in wild disorder; of Pandemoniums let loose and intoxicated with Schiedam; of an accumulation, a wild mingling and engulfing of seas, and people, and heart-rending shrieks, that I shudder to recall.

Sunday morning, at the appointed hour, I found myself at the doors of the English Protestant church—a building of some taste and cost, that has recently been erected at the Hague, and to which the Dutch themselves have largely contributed. Amongst the congregation, very many of them were unmistakably Dutch. The service was well and reverently performed. Many fashionable carriages were drawn up as we issued forth; and gaily-dressed dames, their servants in gold bands and cockades, reclined themselves daintily in their various corners, whilst a few drove off in well-appointed basket carriages, drawn by beautiful ponies, which they whipped up to admiration: though we are bold enough to think that a lady is never less to be admired than when she holds the ribbons.

All this was not suggestive of primitive Holland; nor did we come across anything of the sort elsewhere. But in the train of a Court fashion will follow; and, in a quiet way, the Dutch have enough and to spare for their most ambitious dreams and desires.

On Monday morning we decided to visit Delft, once so famous for its manufacture of pottery. Starting by an early train, we soon reached the interesting old town—far more historically interesting than the Hague. We found it a small, clean, deserted-looking place, its streets intersected by canals, and decorated with long, straight, stiff rows of trees.

Delft now shines by the light of other days. It is no longer famous for anything. Even its pottery manufactures are of the coarsest, commonest kind. I visited one of them, and cannot recommend a repetition of the experiment.

The new church, built in 1381, is an imposing building, and possesses a remarkable monument to the memory of William the First, Prince of Orange. It is a most costly and elaborate erection in black and white marble, full of wonderfully-executed details. The figure of the Prince is conspicuous, with his favourite little dog at his feet—the dog that is said to have saved his life from a midnight attack of Spanish murderers in 1572. As the men approached they disturbed the dog, who, it is said, barked and tore off his master's bedclothes, and so aroused him to his danger.

The old church is a remarkable and ancient structure, with a decidedly leaning tower. Amongst other monuments it contains one

to Van Tromp, who conquered the English fleet in 1652, and subsequently sailed up the Channel with a broom at his masthead.

The house in which William the Silent, Prince of Orange, was assassinated, is immediately opposite this church, and is called the Prinsenhof. It was once a convent, and sheltered nuns; it has now gone to the opposite extreme, and is converted into barracks. The bullet marks that killed the Prince were pointed out to us; and almost with a shudder, as the scene was thus vividly brought before the mind, we went back in imagination to that quiet Sunday morning when the assassin was first introduced into the presence of his victim, who fell by his hand only two days later.

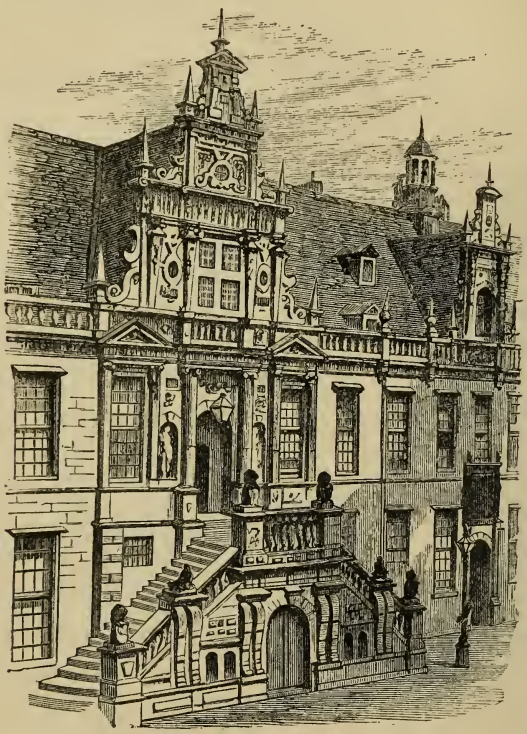
Motley gives a graphic description of the disastrous incident. The assassin, Balthazar Gérard, was a fanatic Roman Catholic: a man of small, insignificant appearance. For seven long years he had cherished the horrible design of murdering the Prince of Orange, and, like most men who strive year after year for one settled object, he at length obtained his opportunity.

"On Tuesday, the 10th of July, 1584, at about half-past twelve, the Prince, with his wife on his arm, and followed by the ladies and gentlemen of his family, was going to the dining-room. . . . . Gérard presented himself at the doorway and demanded a passport. The Princess, struck with the pale and agitated countenance of the man, anxiously questioned her husband concerning the stranger, observing, in an undertone, that 'she had never seen so villanous a countenance.' . . . . At two o'clock the company rose from table. The Prince led the way, intending to pass to his private apartments. . . . Upon the left side of the vestibule, as one approached the stairway, was an obscure arch sunk deep in the wall, and completely in the shadow of the door. . . . . The Prince came from the dining-room, and began leisurely to ascend the stairs. He had only reached the second stair when a man emerged from the sunken arch, and standing within a foot or two of him, discharged a pistol full at his heart. Three balls entered his body, one of which, passing quite through him, struck with violence against the wall beyond. The Prince exclaimed in French, as he felt the wound, 'Oh, my God, have mercy upon my soul! Oh, my God, have mercy upon this poor people!'

"These were the last words he ever spoke, save that when his sister, Catherine of Schwartzburg, immediately afterwards asked him if he commended his soul to Jesus Christ, he faintly answered, 'Yes.' His master of the horse had caught him in his arms as the fatal shot was fired. He was laid upon a couch in the dining-room, where in a few minutes he breathed his last, in the arms of his wife and sister."

The murderer attempted to escape but was caught. If the reader does not chance to know or remember his punishment and death, we must refer him to Motley. It is far too fearful and terrific to be recorded here.

A. made a sketch or two in Delft, and promised himself to return and do more. We went back to the Hague by canal instead of by train. The journey occupied about an hour and a half, and was perhaps the most picturesque bit of travelling we enjoyed throughout Holland. The barge, drawn by a horse, glided along with a quiet, soothing motion. The banks were most characteristic of the country. Quaint houses stood within their own grounds, the latter possessing a certain luxuriance of vegetation as compared with what we had



TOWN-HALL, LEYDEN.

hitherto met; as compared, indeed, with what we met subsequently. Every now and then we encountered a barge on its way to Delft; and the manner in which masts were lowered, and ropes were slackened, the rope of one barge passing beneath the other barge, was a marvel of ingenuity.

The following day, A. having made up his mind to enjoy a day's sketching at the Hague picture gallery, I started for Leyden—or Leiden, as the Dutch write it—accompanied by a guide belonging to the hotel.

Leiden is, historically, one of the most famous and interesting towns in Holland. Those who have read Motley's "Dutch Republic"

must remember his graphic account of the siege. One of the earliest towns in point of foundation, it is one of the least ancient in appearance. Its houses are large and substantially built, many of them possessing plate glass windows, which give them a very modern aspect. The streets are straight and wide, the canals some of them broad, and planted with the inevitable long straight rows of trees. The streets are almost deserted in appearance, and you may traverse the whole town at mid-day without meeting twenty people.

The most ancient looking building, and one really worthy of note, is the town-hall. Leiden also possesses many remarkable museums, besides its famous university. The latter has included Goldsmith and Fielding amongst its students. The Jerusalem Hof is one of the most interesting buildings of the town, having been occupied by the Pilgrim Fathers at the period of their sojourn in Holland.

The siege of Leiden will ever be remembered in the annals of history as one of the most terrible in suffering, the most perfect in endurance, in faith, and in Providential deliverance. Nowhere is it so well told as in the "Dutch Republic."

The inhabitants of Leiden held out against the Spaniards for four months without murmuring. For seven weeks bread and every kind of wholesome provision had been exhausted. As an almost inevitable consequence in a town badly drained and unorganized, pestilence followed in the wake of famine. Not less than 6,000 of the inhabitants were thus carried off, and those who remained were worn out with fatigue and emaciation and the mournful duty of burying their dead. At last the Prince of Orange determined to cut the dykes of the Maas and the Yssel, and thus bring relief to the town. The inundation did not produce the results anticipated. Although the whole country was submerged between Gouda, Dart, Rotterdam, and Leiden, the water rose only a few feet, and the flotilla could not reach the gates of the town. The inhabitants could see the boats, and were driven frantic at the sight of the relief so near to them and yet far off. Maddened by disappointment and suffering they approached the burgomaster, and demanded bread or the surrender of the town. The burgomaster had not the one, and indignantly refused the other; but offered his own body to be cut in pieces for food if they chose to take it. This heroism brought the people back to their senses and devotion. Fortunately their misery was about to end. The wind, which for many weeks had been blowing from the N.E., changed to the N.W., and drove the tide up the river. It then shifted to the S., a violent storm arose, and the flood was driven upon the land with overwhelming force. The ramparts thrown up by the Spaniards were surrounded, and more than 1,000 soldiers perished in the flood. The same tide which swept them away carried the flotilla of the Prince of Orange, laden with provisions, to the very gates of Leiden. And the town was saved. The deliverance took place on the 3rd of October, 1574, and the day may well be commemorated by the citizens as

an evidence of divine interposition in their favour. The deliverance effected, the Spaniards defeated, the wind at the end of three days changed again, and drove the water back from the walls of the town, thus perfecting the safety of both people and country.

The guide pointed out the lock at which the boats first entered for the relief of Leiden. But it has been changed and modernized, and its interest lies in the past. Yet on account of that past it was scarcely possible to avoid a thrill of emotion in gazing upon the spot. The picture of a famished populace rose up in the imagination; a populace terribly thinned by death from starvation and disease; some dying even as the boats came up with their heaven-sent rescue. Well might the inhabitants of Leiden have exclaimed, as did Queen Elizabeth on a subsequent but not dissimilar occasion: "He did blow with His winds and they were scattered."

Leiden has given birth to many great painters—Otto Venius, the master of Rubens, Jan Steen, Gerard Douw, and Mieris; also to some of the Elzevirs, the celebrated printers. Rembrandt was born here in 1613, it is said in a windmill. The country around Leiden is famous for its windmills.

For many reasons, therefore, few towns in Holland are so interesting as Leiden; but it must be viewed through the eyes of history and of the past. As the visitor threads its quiet streets, he must close his eyes to the present and see all through the medium of antiquity. He must bring to bear upon it all those old records which should be stored up in his memory; many of which are so well worked up by Motley, and which he took such wonderful pains to collect and authenticate. Apart from this historical atmosphere, this halo thrown around it by the events of a bygone day, Leiden possesses no great charm or attraction.

All these things in the mind, it was impossible to leave it without regret. The Hague in comparison bore all the appearance of a noisy, fashionable town. And that again appeared as a quiet, uneventful place in comparison with the scenes of our next day's destination—Amsterdam. Space, however, and the dignity due to the capital of Holland, and its surrounding pleasant excursions, compel us to defer a further description to a more convenient season.

Charles W. Wood.

AT SHERLEY.

CARE and responsibility had come to Joseph Hannaford early in life; for he was not more than eighteen when his father died, and left his mother and his young sister to his care. There was property enough for them all, to be sure; but it was chiefly in land and stock, and needed Joseph's vigilant superintendence to make it profitable. This superintendence he gave faithfully and willingly, and never once complained that to do so forced him to resign sundry secretly cherished personal ambitions of his own. The late Mr. Hannaford had never been willing to let any part of his estate. He had liked to farm it himself, and his widow chose to do the same. It was a vast responsibility for the young man—scarcely, indeed, to be called a man—to take upon his shoulders. But his mother's will and his mother's wish had always been law with him, and he would not fail her now. The charge wrought its own work upon his nature—made him provident, thoughtful, calculating, thrifty—precisely an old young man.

This state of things continued for ten years. Then his sister married, and removed to town. His mother desired to accompany her daughter, to whom she was ardently attached. She wished to quit Sherley—as their place was called—and make herself a home in town. The difficulty was—how to leave Joseph? Sherley was his own: but his mother did not think it well that he should be alone in it.

"You must get yourself a wife, Joseph," said his mother. And of course Mr. Hannaford of Sherley was in a position to make marriage convenient and desirable. But he was quite too well disciplined to have cherished any idle fancies or importunate longings.

Whether, before this epoch, he had suffered any truant thoughts to wander in the direction of Miss Fay, who had been growing towards her sweet womanhood not very far away from his door, I cannot conjecture. I only know that about this time he began to discover that her eyes were blue, her hair golden, her cheeks like flower of the peach, and that her lips blossomed with a sweetness which he longed to taste. He told her these things in some discreet fashion of his own, and she—he was her first lover, and the right of discovery has gone for a good deal in all ages.

Everyone said he was making a great mistake in choosing Caroline Fay. The neighbours thought they knew what he wanted a great deal better than he himself; friends and acquaintances always do know: they told him that Caroline was too dainty, too refined; that she would be out of place in a farm-house—and what better, they'd like to know, was his house than a farm? Caroline was pretty, fanciful,

useless; wouldn't do him, as a manager, the least good in the world. He had his managing housekeeper, Mr. Hannaford replied; but, as the remonstrators pointed out, a housekeeper was one thing and a wife was another. Some of them had daughters of their own, far more suitable to the position than was that Carrie Fay.

Miss Fay was an orphan: but an old bachelor uncle had cherished her, and kept her from all sense of loneliness or desolation by his constant and fatherly kindness. Under his roof she had grown up to eighteen years, and at that period it was that this gentleman entered to woo and win her.

Old Mr. Fay felt secretly uncomfortable, for he understood just what Carrie was better than anyone else did; and he knew that it would be no easy matter to make a working bee out of a golden-winged butterfly, if indeed it was essential that a working bee she should be. On the other hand, Caroline was evidently in love with her suitor; and Mr. Hannaford was certainly an unexceptionable match: quite justified in marrying to please himself, and able to make his wife comfortable in her own way afterwards.

So, in due time, the wedding took place, and Caroline Fay became Mrs. Hannaford. After a short absence they returned to Sherley, and Caroline was installed in her new home.

She felt happy as a queen. She had begun by idealizing, and ended by adoring, her lord and master. He was certainly a good-looking man, with a well-formed figure and a well-formed face. His eyes were clear and honest, his features good, his lips firm and thin. In short, there was power in his face, manly vigour in his frame; but he was a straightforward, practical man, without an ounce of imagination.

He was no lover in his manner: petty caresses were not to his taste: and Caroline began to be woefully disappointed. Courting was very well in its way. It had not been without its shy delights, even for him. But they were married now, and it was time to settle down, and begin life as life should hold out. His wife would fain have had him kiss her when he went out, and hold her to his heart when he came in. But he attempted nothing of the kind. Their wedding-day had been in September; and when the late October winds blew away the sapless withered leaves, Carrie felt as if her hopes, which had blossomed so fairly, were blowing along with the leaves, and withering, as they, with the wind.

She was a conscientious, well-intentioned little creature. She tried her best to put aside all these feelings; and to believe them morbid and ungrateful: constantly striving to justify her husband, making little pleas for him at the bar of her heart. He was ten years older than she; it would not be natural for him to have so much romance. Of course he loved her; why else would he have married her? But he had so much to do; so much to see after, so much to think of: his whole days had to be passed in activity. Without him,

things often went wrong out of doors—men were so idle and so stupid —some days he hardly gave himself time to snatch his meals. What a goose, then, she was to expect of a big, strong, busy man the little softnesses which belong to and delight women!

But the more Mrs. Hannaford strove to reason, the less could she bring her poor unsatisfied heart to be happy. She would strive to be brave; she would say, perhaps it was all her own fault. And she would seek to win him back by making herself attractive: wear the dress and the ribbons he had praised six months ago; and meet him, her eyes bright with hope, her cheeks pink with expectation. Was he blind to all this?—had he grown old, this young man, that the sweet devices of youth had no longer for him any language? At any rate, he made no sign.

How dull and prosy and commonplace were the long winter evenings which they passed together! Dinner over—it was taken at five o'clock in winter—for three mortal hours they sat in unbroken quiet, he reading his newspapers through and through, or his books; she watching him, and wondering whether life was to go on at this dead level for ever. Then tea came in; and then Mr. Hannaford would pull off his boots and put on his slippers preparatory for bed. She grew to hate the pulling off of those boots; she began to fear she should grow to hate everything. She had not the heart to open the piano: in fact, she was not much hand at music.

Joseph Hannaford was perhaps less to blame than you may deem. He erred from mistake; not wittingly. These quiet kind of evenings he had been forced to during his mother's reign; was trained to them: for she had not strong health and must have perfect quiet—or thought she must. And then, it must be again repeated, he was not of a demonstrative nature; some of the truest and deepest hearts are not. How could he tell that his poor young wife was yearning for love, withering for those signs and tokens of it that he did not give her?

Slowly the winter wore away—"the long sad season of snows and sins." Birds came back from over the seas, and began to flood the land with song. Violets opened their shy blossoms; grass blades sprang up in their tender green: and even Caroline Hannaford brightened with the brightening of nature, and began to remember that she herself was young.

One day in May her husband came to her with an open letter in his hand, as she sat, in her pretty garden hat, under the spreading branches of the lime tree. A distant connection of his, one Hugh Waring, who had paid Sherley a visit a year or two before, wanted to come again.

"I suppose I may say yes, Caroline?"

"Oh--of course—yes," she answered, for there was no earthly proposal her husband could make to which she would have said no. Nevertheless, she knew not why, some instinct in her heart had risen up against it. What if this Mr. Waring should turn out to be another

cold, prosy, silent man, such as Joseph was?—she should die of the two.

"It will not cause you trouble, his coming?" continued Mr. Hannaford.

"Not at all. How long do you think he will stay?"

"Perhaps all the summer. He did last time."

"Oh, my goodness!" thought the poor young wife. "Is he—pleasant, Joseph?"

"Pleasant? Yes, he is pleasant enough. My mother and Fanny had chiefly to entertain him: I am always busy in summer. I'll write, then, and tell him to come.

Of course Caroline assented—for what could she do else?—and kept secret her own dissatisfaction with the prospect before her.

It only took Mr. Waring's arrival, however, to reconcile her to his presence. With his first deferential bow over her hand, she became his willing hostess. He was of a type that the young wife had never before, in her short, quiet life, encountered—a man of wealth, of fashion, and of leisure; high-bred, scholarly, and belonging to the ancient order of gentlemen. He was a handsomer man, too, than one often meets, with his clearly-cut features and their warm colouring, the chestnut hair and flowing beard, and the bright dark eyes.

He was not a prosy and silent man. Impulse was strong within him; discipline had not yet taught him discretion. When he felt strongly, he would speak strongly, and, perhaps, act recklessly; but under ordinary circumstances he had the aplomb and the cool self-possession of a man of the world.

Very soon he began to perceive that to stay with the Hannafords now was a slightly different thing from what it had been in the administration of Joseph Hannaford's self-contained mother and staid sister. Fanny Hannaford had been one of those sedate, prudish women who will not allow a man's hand to touch theirs in greeting, once they are engaged. The young wife was of altogether another order. It may be questioned whether she would have made any serious impression on him had he met her as Miss Fay. But since her marriage, and the disappointment it had brought, a soul-subduing pathos had grown into Caroline's look which somehow went to Mr. Waring's heart. Perhaps, too, the strongest appeal which can be made to a man's chivalry is the sight of a sad and neglected woman, who neither parades nor confesses her misery.

Hugh Waring was not a bad man. In some respects, indeed, his heart and his life were purer and fresher than those of most men. He certainly meant no harm to his fair young hostess. He would not have added a feather's weight to the burden which had already begun to bear so hardly upon her life. But he commenced by pitying her; and Love has been Pity's neighbour ever since the world began.

He was tender and gentle to her as no one had ever been before. No one had ever seemed to sympathise with her as he sympathised.

He was not too busy or preoccupied to notice the fresh roses in her hair, or the blushes on her cheeks. If she liked a wild flower he had brought home, he made light of a long walk to fetch her another on the morrow. While she sewed, or sat idle with her hands upon her lap, he read to her, and taught her to love Keats, and Shelley, and Browning. At nightfall he used to sing to her, accompanying himself with his light soft touch: sweet suggestive love-songs, and old ballads which have faltered down through the centuries their tearful music. She would sit at the open window in the twilight and listen, knowing she had never heard such songs, such melody, before. As to Mr. Hannaford, the chances were that he would be outside giving directions to his bailiff, or in his little room poring over the accounts of his estate.

All this time it is to be doubted whether Mr. Waring had ever thought of danger—for himself or for her. She certainly never had. Her delight was pure and sweet. She would have said, if anyone had questioned her, that Mr. Waring was her husband's friend and her friend—the best friend she had ever had. Unquestioned, she did not say as much as that, even to herself. She scarcely knew that it was summer with her heart, as well as with the year; or that the summer days were flying fast. The contrast, between this pleasant time and the monotonous months that had preceded it, was all too welcome.

Nor did anything in the aspect of affairs make her husband uneasy. To do this gentleman justice, whom perhaps circumstances, rather than nature, had made apathetical, he was neither mean nor ungenerous. His confidence in this young wife of his was perfect. She loved him; he knew that; she was his to have and to hold: why should he grudge her a few hours which some one else made pleasant after a fashion not his own? It never occurred to him to grudge or doubt it, any more than he would have grudged it to his most staid sister. I do not think he was likely to lose anything by this generosity, or that any amount of suspicious espionage on his part would have served his own cause better.

There came, at last, an evening of revelation to the two who were going on so blindly; though, perhaps, it had come to Mr. Waring before. He had been sitting silently through the sunset, watching the play of the warm light on Mrs. Hannaford's fair face and golden hair. She looked wonderfully young and helpless, with her extreme delicacy, her appealing eyes, and her soft white dress, made as simply as a babe's, and girdled with a blue ribbon. A languor, born perhaps of the summer heats, oppressed her. She was stooping forward, leaning her head upon her hand, and looking frail as a snow-wreath which a wind might blow away. Waring sat silently, unconsciously watching her: both of them seemed to be buried in thought: watched her, until the sunset lights no longer played upon her hair. A curious awe began to steal over him, as he saw her through the gathering shadows, white, and still, and unearthly as a spirit. Then, suddenly moving

his seat, he touched the keys of the piano, and his voice rose out of the semi-darkness in a sort of chant, too low and even to be called a song.

"Sweet is true love, though given in vain, in vain :
And sweet is death that puts an end to pain :
I know not which is sweeter— no, not I.

"Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be :
Love, thou art bitter ; sweet is death to me.
Oh, love ! if death be sweeter, let me die.

"Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away—
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay—
I know not which is sweeter—no, not I."

Her tears were falling fast before he had finished. A spell was upon her which she did not understand, and could not evade. Still she kept silent, saying nothing. He came back to the window and began to speak. The words, as they fell from him, seemed to pierce her like a sword.

"Mrs. Hannaford, I fear I must be leaving you. This pleasant place, Sherley, must see me no longer."

"Leave !" she cried in a startled, hesitating kind of tone, her voice very low. "When ?"

"I think—to-morrow."

"But I thought," she faltered, timidly, "you were to stay through all the summer."

"So I should have stayed—had all things been favourable ; been as they were under the old régime. It is not good for me to be here under the new one."

"I have tried," she began ; and then she stopped. Her tears, springing from the pain at her heart, choked her. She could not go on, and tell him, in simple commonplaces, that she had tried to make his visit comfortable.

"If you had done no more than you tried to do, all would have been well," he cried, his tones fervent with sudden passion. "I saw you—just what you were ; and your husband—just what he was. I saw how much love lay within you, how much of fond devotion you were yearning to give ; and how little you were even asked to give to him—your husband. Heaven help us both, for I have learned to love you ! Therefore I dare not stay here."

She said nothing; but he heard through the stillness the bitter sobbing which she strove to smother. It was more thon he could bear. He crossed over to her, but he did not attempt to touch her. Some shield of purity was about her which held him aloof. Folding his arms, he stood upright.

"Caroline," he said, calling her for the first time by her Christian name, "I must go away to-morrow ; but you shall go too, if you will. Your love would be worth to me any sacrifice. What would mine be

worth to you? You know just how much your husband cares for you. You have seen what life with him is. Do you think it would break his heart to lose you? I tell you, no. He would very composedly divorce himself from you, and marry more wisely next time. You would be free in a few months, and the moment you *were* free, you should become my wife. So help me Heaven, I would deal honourably with you. Are you listening?"

A slight movement of the fingers answered for her. But no sign came from the bent, still face.

"Honourably and chivalrously as it is possible for man to deal with woman. I would separate myself from you from the moment we leave this house until the marriage day, if your sense of right exacted it. No brother ever protected a sister more jealously than I would protect you. Do you believe me?"

He caught a low "Yes," murmured under her breath.

"Then will you come? I think I can make life a different thing for you in future from what it ever has been. You shall know what it is to be loved by a man with a man's heart in him. *Will* you come? Or will you refuse, and stay here to settle down into the old uncongenial life, and send me away alone to bemoan the fate that brought me this year to Sherley and to the knowledge of its mistress? Caroline, I have never loved but you."

He stopped; and she could hear his heart beat in the silence. Temptation beset her sorely. How sweet this love would be of which he spoke—this love for which she had so hungered—this passionate lover's love, which Joseph Hannaford did not give her, perhaps would never give her. She had a temperament to which love was the supreme thing. It was her one idea of Heaven. But she had not gone far enough away from the innocence of childhood for her guardian angel to have forsaken her. Clearly, amidst her mind's bewilderment, as if some human voice had spoken it, she heard a whisper, which came again and again, and *would* be obeyed—*Pray.*

"Pardon me," she said to Mr. Waring: and ran away to her own room.

In the darkness she did not see her husband. He had come up without a light for a roll of papers out of his bureau, that stood in the far corner beyond the bed. He had thought that he could put his hand upon them: but they appeared not to be there. Sitting down in his arm chair close by, he began to consider where he could have laid them, when his wife's entrance disturbed him. He would have spoken, but somehow he felt the excitement of her mood, and was silenced by it.

Kneeling down by the side of the bed, she tried to obey the voice that had spoken to her. But she could not collect her thoughts, and only two words would come, over and over again—"Help, Lord, help!"

Vaguely, Joseph Hannaford comprehended that she was passing

through the crisis of an agony, such as he, in all his placid life, had never experienced or witnessed. Delicacy withheld him from betraying his presence; some intuition prevented him from attempting to comfort her. Nay, he felt how idle would be any consolation which he could offer in an agony such as this. But when at last she left the room, he arose and stole softly after her. A deep yearning tenderness for her filled his whole soul. He had never loved her half so well in his life: and what could this trouble be which was breaking her heart? He *must* acquaint himself with it.

Downstairs she went, and into the dim room where Hugh Waring waited for her; for he had believed that she meant to come again. Mr. Hannaford softly crossed the hall and entered the little room adjoining, the door between them being partly open. He thought it no dishonour to listen: he was doing it out of love for her.

She began to speak at first with a certain feverish eagerness; as if she doubted her own strength, and must hurry through what she had to say before it failed her; but, as she went on, a deeper and calmer earnestness grew into her words.

"Your companionship has made life very pleasant to me, Mr. Waring. I never knew what it was before to have a friend who cared for the same things I cared for; and no one else was ever so gentle to me as you have been. I did not know how much you were to me until you spoke this evening of going away. I want love more than I want any other earthly thing; but I do not think that it is love, or anything of the kind, which has intruded itself into our intercourse. Friendship it may be: and I think is. You have pitied me because you saw that my life was a disappointed one—that I was lonely, and unreconciled to my fate; but I do not believe you would have chosen me out of a world full of women, had you found me free and happy."

"But——"

"Please let me go on. Your society has been very pleasant to me, perhaps almost dangerously so. But we will not talk about that; and I have my duty to do. Love on my part it could not have been, and I beg you to understand that——"

"Could not have been?"

"No: because I love my husband. I loved him passionately when we married; and, though he is cold to me and does neglect me, I have the same kind of feeling for him, and shall have it for ever. Had it been otherwise I should be true to him. I will not make myself unfit to meet my dead father and mother again in Heaven.—— Yes, I hear what you say, and appreciate it. I do believe that you would be faithful and tender, but your best tenderness, even though I loved you, could not atone to me if I took so fatal a step, and lost for your sake my own soul. I hope you will not say to a woman again what you have said to me. Had I been foolish enough to listen to you, it must have resulted in shame and sorrow for us both."

"I think not—I think never!" Waring cried, passionately. "Oh, Mrs. Hannaford, I *could* make you happy."

"Not in despite of God," she said slowly: and turned away.

Standing still in the shadow, her husband watched her leave the room to go upstairs. And then he stole noiselessly out of doors, for he was wise enough not to see her then.

What in him was really true, and noble, and worthy of a woman's loving, came out now, as it had never come before. He looked straight into his own heart, with eyes which tried to be as just as the justice of Heaven.

He did not blame Hugh Waring, as a hotter-tempered man might have done. He blamed himself. He understood how it had been: that poor Caroline's sad, sweet face, and lonely life, had touched the man's heart, and so he forgave him. But he would never forgive himself. How could he have been so absurdly misjudging as to fancy this young wife of his might be left to her own devices as he had left his old mother and sober sister to theirs—and Fanny was older than himself.

It seemed to him, pacing out there under the summer stars, that he had never loved his wife till now. He saw what he had been doing when he took into his keeping this mere girl, this young creature whose natural aliment was love, and then deliberately starved her—expected her to be as self-contained and independent as his mother had been. How recklessly he had been throwing away his pearl of great price! But what if it were not altogether too late for him to recover it? She had loved him once—she had said that she could love him even now, if he cared again to be her lover. Did he *not* care? His pulses began to throb very much as if he were a young man of passion. If love, tender and patient, could win her back, she should yet be more his own than ever, please Heaven.

He would never pain her, he resolved, by telling her what had come to his knowledge. If ever she felt near enough to him again to confide in him, her confidence should come unforced and unsought. But he would use every power which God had given him to make her happy. He would not be too proud to knock again at her heart's door, and let her tender voice bid him enter.

Hugh Waring, pacing the dark shrubbery lower down, every now and then brought himself into the light summer night, for the moon was up. His head was bent, his face sad and troubled. It was not a bad face: on the contrary: and Mr. Hannaford could not help fancying that he was repenting for having spoken as he did speak that night.

When he finally went upstairs he found his wife in bed. She was lying, with white, still face, upon the scarcely whiter pillow. He knew she was not asleep; but he saw that she wished him to think her so, and respected her wish.

The next day, some letters were delivered to Mr. Waring. They

served as a plea of excuse for his sudden departure: which he then first spoke of to his host. "Business of importance—wanted in town —must start that morning." Breakfast over, he went up to see to his portmanteau. Mrs. Hannaford was alone when he came down with it packed, and the dog-cart was at the door.

"Do I bid you good-bye for ever?" he asked, looking into those sad, entreating eyes of hers, which had wrought his woe.

"I think that is best," she said gently. "Unless you can come back as much my husband's friend as mine."

"I shall never return unless I can: be you very sure of that," he answered. And then, bending over her hand, he left on it a farewell kiss, respectfully as he would have kissed the hand of his sovereign.

"I wish to tell you that you have done right," he said, in a low, earnest tone. "You are sending me into the world a wayfarer, who seems to have no longer hope or interest in life: but you have acted rightly. We shall be thankful for it, both of us, when we come to stand at the Great Judgment Bar. God bless you!—and forgive me!"

He was gone before she could answer a word: and she heard and saw the dog-cart bowl away, her husband driving. Was she never to see that handsome, loving face again in all time?—never to hear again that voice which had spoken to her words of such strong tender ness? Was it her destiny to go on in the old cold life, till she was an old, old woman? Why, she might live to be eighty—people did sometimes—and she was only nineteen now! Oh, it was not that she loved Hugh Waring; *that* did not bring her these regrets: but she did shrink from encountering again the lonely and monotonous life from which his presence had rescued her.

July was on the wane, with all the July warmth and brightness. But Mrs. Hannaford felt strangely cold. She put a light shawl on, and sat down with a book under the lime tree, now full of leaves. But the book seemed very stupid, and her tears fell on it.

"Come what may, I will do my duty," she thought, "I will be always studying Joseph's comfort. He may forget me, but I will not let it make me forget him. Suppose I go and make some raspberry cream for lunch? He is fond of it."

Early in the afternoon she was rather surprised to see the small open carriage brought to the door, her husband's favourite horse in it.

"Will you go to Danbury with me, Caroline?" he asked that moment, looking in and smiling.

"To Danbury! Oh, I should like it so much. But can you get away? I thought at this time of day you were always busy."

"Yes, I often am. But our busiest days will soon be over. I should like to see a little more of my wife, now that I have her all to myself again."

She tripped upstairs for her shawl and hat, feeling more light of heart than she would have believed, two hours ago, was possible.

"I have been talking to White this morning," Mr. Hannaford observed as they drove along—alluding to the farm bailiff: "and told him that unless he can see after things better, so as to obviate my constant superintendence, he may look out for another situation."

"I do think you seem to have more active trouble thrown upon you than you ought to have," she timidly remarked.

"I am beginning to think so myself, dear. I should like to get a little more time with you." And Caroline's heart leaped up as he said it.

Have I made you understand aright, I wonder, this little wife's not uncommon type of character? If she had had a stronger and deeper individuality, she would have been less easy to content. Now she asked only for enough love. She had a nature which needed summer days and sunshine—lips ripe for kisses; fond, smiling eyes; clinging fingers. Love she must have; or life to her was utterly without hope or savour. She had intellect enough to understand Waring's tastes; but intellect was not her speciality. She had little originality, but she was pure and sweet, with a native-born conscientiousness which would be likely to carry her safely through places which might have been full of peril for far stronger women; and a capacity for self-devotion, if she could only be loved tenderly enough to call it forth, which in itself was infinite. It was her husband's love she wanted; her husband's love she had been pining for.

Then Hugh Waring came into her mind. She supposed he had reached his destination—that gay world, which he had intimated would be so barren without her smile. And she felt herself quite ungrateful because her own heart was feeling so glad as she bowled along by her husband's side over the pleasant country roads. They had tea with some friends at Danbury; and, later, set off home again with the sunset light upon the fair new-mown fields, and the clouds opening gates of flame into the celestial kingdom.

When they reached home at last, after the stars had risen, her husband lifted her out, and held her a moment in his arms while he kissed her, before the groom ran up. She felt herself blushing like a girl. As for him, in this strife to win her heart anew there was more of excitement and endeavour than he had ever known in the easy days when he was her lover. Having felt himself in danger of losing her, he began to understand how much the keeping her was worth his while.

Caroline went indoors quite at fault. *Did* her husband love her? Had the coldness and neglect, which even Mr. Waring had seen and commented on, been all a mistake? She would not think out her puzzle. Instead, with hope young again in her heart, she made her hair smooth, her dress tasteful, and went downstairs to the man from whose coldness, only last night, she had been half tempted to flee away. As they sat in the moonlight outside, while a tray of refreshments was being made ready, Mr. Hannaford took her hand into his, and held it

For a few days, her husband's newly-born devotion made Caroline Hannaford intensely happy. The excitement of joy which it brought her, left her mind no room for other thought. But then a reaction set in; and she grew wretched. The better satisfied she became with him, the more dissatisfied she was with herself. Conscience was at work. Not a caress did he give her, that she did not think—"Would he do this, and this, if he knew how near I had come to loving someone else?—or, at least, to finding all that pleasure in his society Would he tolerate me for a moment could he know that Mr. Waring had actually asked me to run away with him and be *his* wife? He would think there must have been something reprehensible in my own conduct—and I think there must have been, though I did not suspect it. I did like him—oh, very, very much. But not as I love my husband. And what would he say? Woe's me!"

So entirely did this train of thought take hold of her, that she grew at last to shrink secretly from every demonstration of his love; and he, watching her keenly, felt that somehow the past was raising a barrier between them, and wondered sadly if his best endeavours were to fail, and this wife of his heart was never again to be fully and freely his own.

As for her, she grew thin and pale. Her bright lips were bright no longer, her eyes had dark rings under them. Night after night she lay awake, and thought, and thought, coming always to the same conclusion—she had no right to his love until he knew all; and if he knew all, he himself would withdraw it from her. She was the less ready to trust him: because he had been so calm for his years, so fixed in his ways, so unimpassioned, during all the first months of their married life: she could not believe it would be in his power either to understand or to forgive her. So she went on, bearing her burden through slow days and silent nights, until the anniversary of her wedding-day came round.

Her uncle came to spend it with them, and a few other friends. The little festival was of Mr. Hannaford's planning: he had spared neither pains nor expense. But she, poor Caroline, felt like a guilty creature as she listened to their congratulations: what would they say if they knew all? She could not hide her trouble, her fear, and her misery. The guests wondered at this white still wraith, this unwife-like bride, this woman whom a single year seemed to have turned to stone. What could be the matter with her?

Mr. Hannaford silently asked himself the same question. His heart failed him. Could it possibly be that he had been mistaken in her, and that she was pining for Hugh Waring?

The guests left rather early. In fact, Mrs. Hannaford seemed scarcely equal to the entertaining of them. Looking about for his wife, he found her in her bedroom without candle, sitting at the bow window. Her face looked white and cold in the moon's rays. Drawing a ring from his pocket, he sat down to put it on her finger.

"I do not know that you will care for it, Caroline," he said: "but

I got this ring as the symbol of a new bridal. If you could love me to-day as well as you did one year ago, I think I could make you happier; for I understand now what love means to a woman."

She drew away the hand he had taken. A brilliant colour flamed in her cheeks and her heart throbbed: but a courage which was half desperation shone from her eyes. She spoke passionately.

"You must not put that ring on; you must never say one tender, loving word to me again until you know me just as I am."

"And what are you?"

Clearly, steadily, unfalteringly, without reserve or concealment, out her story came. It was the story of her whole married life; her disappointment because he did not love her enough; her patient little endeavours to please him, which bore no fruit; then Hugh Waring's interest and tenderness; and, last of all, his declaration, and that for a moment she almost felt tempted to listen to it.

"Well?" said Mr. Hannaford, as she ceased. "Go on, Caroline."

"The recollection of this has nearly killed me," she resumed, with a burst of tears. "Since you became so full of love for me, I have been unable to endure it. Every fond word has pierced me like a knife. I have thought how different it would be if you knew all!"

"Because you love Mr. Waring?"

"Love Mr. Waring!" she echoed. "No; because I love you. Because I have no right to your kindness. Oh, I have been very wretched! Every fond word of yours has half killed me; I thought how different you would be if you knew all."

"But I did know all," he quietly said.

Mrs. Hannaford would have started from him in her surprise, but that he held her to him in his strong arm.

"*You knew it!*"

"My darling, yes. Just as much as you did:" and he shortly explained how it had been. "It never turned me from you for a single moment. I blamed myself too much to blame you."

Her heart, breaking with its woe before, seemed now as though it must burst with rapture.

"Joseph, oh, Joseph!" she sobbed, nestling to him, "you must be—divine."

"No, my dear, very human; but I love you. Are you ready now to wear my pledge?"

She did not answer—in words. In the gathering darkness he slipped his ring upon her finger: and the two that had been so separated were made one.

So a new life set in at Sherley. One that would last for all time

L. C. M.

MIGNONNE.

"THAT? Oh, that's my small sister, Mignonne. A rather uncommon face, is it not?" And Mr. John Chandon (called by his friends, Jack) glanced at the rough sketch which his visitor had unearthed from his portfolio, and then turned back to his work on the easel.

"Your sister?" Philip Winterhalter regarded the bit of paper more attentively. "Not much like you, Jack," he said. "What a pretty, babyish look the face has!"

"She is scarcely more than a baby," said Jack, with his head held critically on one side, to observe the effect of the last few touches given to his painting. "Only a little girl, you know; but an uncommonly nice one. You don't often meet one like Mignonne."

"But her name's not Mignonne, is it?"

"Her name's Margaret. We call her Mignonne, like the mignonne she is. I have taken her here to live with me, now. At least, for a time: the old aunt, where she has her home, is gone to some outlandish place to stay with her sick sister-in-law—the Orkneys—or the Shetlands: I forget where."

"What a trouble the child must be to you!"

"Trouble!" John Chandon's eyes opened in wonder. "I only wish she may never go away again. We have great fun over the housekeeping; half driving my ancient servant, Becky, wild. Mignonne ——. Here she comes, I believe! In some muddle, no doubt, over the accounts, as usual. The child thinks if she spends a shilling more than she ought, it would ruin me."

The door was swung back, and a young girl appeared in the opening. She wore a scanty cotton frock, and her golden hair fell back in a curly mass, somewhat as a child's does; a small paper book was in her hand, and a perplexed look on her sweet face.

"Oh, Jack, I *can't* make it come right," she said. "With my adding-up it makes only thirty-seven shillings and sevenpence halfpenny: and I know I have spent over two pounds. Becky ——"

At that moment Mr. Winterhalter moved a step or two from behind the easel, and she stopped short, gazing at him. She had no idea anyone was there.

"Never mind Becky and the shillings, Birdie," said Jack. "This is Mr. Winterhalter. As to the accounts—I have no head for them, you know, so they must go."

But the girl, in sheer conscientiousness, still looked distressed. Old Becky, who had had her own sway so long, had told her she was sure it was nearer fifty-seven shillings than thirty-seven. Mr. Winterhalter advanced, a smile on his lips.

"May I try to help you?"

"Oh, thank you! Can you do accounts? Jack can't."

Had Philip Winterhalter been equal to the mental effort, he might have wondered at his own readiness to aid in anything. But he was not equal to it: he was too thoroughly indolent. One of the butterflies of fashion and prosperity, who drop into their fortunes with their birth, he just droned and lounged through his days in utter inertness.

It did strike him as a little odd, when he took the complicated columns of figures in his hand to begin his task, that he should have offered his assistance; but the sensation of being useful was something novel; it pleased him for the time being. And besides, it was such a very pretty little girl who leant over him, hindering him in the most unconscious and charming manner.

"Get it wrong again as quickly as possible," he said, when the victory was won over the obstinate figures, "and then apply to me. I feel quite refreshed by my exertions. Don't thank me, I beg of you; I consider it a privilege." And then he began languidly to coax on his gloves, looking smilingly at Mignonne, as he wished her good morning. "I shall come in often, if I may, Chandon," he said; "it's dull in town now, and I am bored to death." And so he departed.

It was curious how that child's face haunted him; the great, wide open, dark-blue eyes, with their long, straight lashes; the clear, babyish complexion; the delicate, sensitive mouth; and the long flow of golden hair. "Such a pretty, pretty little girl!" he said, half-unconsciously. "Such a pretty child!"

The next day he was at Chandon's studio again; and the next and the next. Mr. Winterhalter had suddenly become greatly interested in art; and Jack Chandon was the very man to give him ideas on the subject. He thought truly it was the art: he did not then suspect that it was Mignonne. Mignonne ran in and out of the studio at will: it was so much pleasanter there than in the shabby little dining-room, or in watching Becky make the puddings: and she and their frequent visitor became firm friends. By-and-by, Philip Winterhalter went into the dining-room of his own accord, and seemed to have the run of the house.

"A very pretty little girl," he had called her; and this conviction grew stronger on him daily. "A very, very pretty little girl" she was indeed.

"She'll make more than one heart ache by-and-by," he thought, as he sat in the sitting-room one evening with her and Jack, and watched her spread the toast for them both and pour out the tea. "Chandon will have his hands full—and I don't envy him. The whole world will be wanting to come after such a blossom as that."

Somehow he could not get the idea out of his mind. After tea, Jack being busy at the table with some pen-and-ink sketches, Mignonne sat down on the stool at the corner of the hearth-rug, and turned her gaze on Philip.

"What are you thinking of that you look so cross?" she said. "It must be something dreadful."

"Only of you, little girl," he answered, smiling down at her. "Nothing so dreadful after all, is it?"

"And what of me?" The childish persistence was very charming. "What have I done?"

"Nothing as yet. It's what you will do, of which I was thinking—when you are a grown young lady—when you begin to think of leaving Jack."

"I shall *never* leave Jack!" the pretty hand came down forcibly on one knee in the heat of argument. "Never, Mr. Winterhalter."

"And if your aunt comes home and claims you?"

"Jack says he'll not let me go back again."

"But—though you do remain here—if you learnt to care for anyone—as you will some day, my dear child—and Jack, knowing that you would be happy with him, should be willing to resign you, that would be different, you know."

But the pretty head still shook a most decided negative. "Jack would never be willing, I know. And"—there was a sudden little flash of temper in the girlish voice—"and I don't like to hear you talk about my caring for anyone else except Jack and ——"

"And whom?" asked Mr. Winterhalter, in the sudden pause she came to, as he gazed admiringly at the heightened colour and bright eyes. "And whom, Mignonne?"

"And you," she said, looking up at him in her frank, childish way. "I like you, next to Jack, Mr. Winterhalter."

He laughed, a lazy little laugh—she was such a pretty little girl, and so childishly honest. "I am very glad you do," he said. "But why do you like me?"

"Because you don't wear coarse and ugly clothes; because you don't smoke a pipe in the room; because you don't say ungentlemanly words; and because—because I *do!*"

"Thanks," said Mr. Winterhalter, unconscious that she had been about to add "because you are so tall and good-looking," and had stopped herself. How refreshingly candid she was! How purely and simply her aunt had brought her up!

"And I like you too, little girl," he said. "We are excellent friends. But you will outgrow your liking presently; I shall be quite left behind when you are a young lady."

He had offended her now; he saw it in the drooping of her eyelids and the corners of her mouth.

"It's like once, like always, with us Chandons," she said, rising, and standing with one hand resting on the mantelpiece, looking down intently at the fire; and then for a time they were silent. The lazily handsome gentleman was entirely too indolent, it seemed, to carry the conversation farther, and contented himself with looking at her through his half-closed eyes, and admiring her immensely. It was perfectly

absurd for him to feel towards a child as he felt to her. He admired her, he was fascinated by her pretty ways and frank childishness: but still that hardly accounted for the constant way in which she filled his thoughts. Here or abroad, she was always in them. "If she were a few years older," he thought, "I should be afraid that I was falling in love with her; but a child like that—it's absurd!" and so he rose to go.

"Running away?" asked Jack.

"I *must* go," was the answer. "Mrs. and Miss Winterhalter have come to town, and they want me to-night."

"Your aunt and cousin, are they not?" said Jack. "Miss Winterhalter came to my studio once: she is very beautiful."

"I will bring her again, Jack. Yes, she is very beautiful, and very nice. We are great friends. Good-night, Mignonne."

But Mignonne, oddly enough, did not smile as the door closed after him. The fire needed attention, and, kneeling down to look at it, two bright tears fell on the fender. And why? Was it because he had called his cousin beautiful and said they were great friends? Well?—were not he and herself great friends? Had he not just told her that he "liked her," too? And was she not a very pretty little girl, who would some day have numerous lovers? It was foolish and childish of her, certainly, to be vexed about that beautiful cousin.

What would Mignonne have thought had she known that the beautiful cousin and Philip Winterhalter were engaged to one another? They had been engaged some months now. And perhaps the young lady's absence from town had caused all Philip's listlessness, and sent him to Jack Chandon's to dissipate it.

Of course Philip Winterhalter was delighted to have his affianced wife back in town; of course he had felt wretchedly unhappy and out of sorts during her absence; but, some way, he seemed a little *distrait* and ill at ease this evening, as he revelled in the sunshine of her presence. Frederica noticed it. She was really a lovely girl, tall and fair, with bright brown eyes that were near-sighted.

"How have you been spending your time lately?" she asked, as he stood by the piano, turning her music, and trying to look inexpressibly happy and not absent. "The Latimers wrote me word that you had gone picture-mad. But you never mentioned it in your letters."

"Did they?"

"They said you were studying with an artist—painting pictures in his studio. Is it so, Philip?"

"I have been sometimes to Chandon's place. But I fear I shall never make the hand at it that I thought to make when I first went."

"Chandon? Oh, I know him—a little. A simple, pleasant, absent-minded kind of man. Does he live alone?"

"He did. Lately he has had his sister with him."

"His sister," repeated Frederica, bending forward in her short-sighted way to look at her notes—for she was playing all this while. "Is she pretty?"

He laughed, hesitated, and then grew grave. "Very. She has one of the loveliest faces I ever saw; the most charming of manners. She is only a little girl: and her sweet simplicity is refreshing."

"I should like to see her," said Miss Winterhalter, quite taken with the description. "Only a little girl!"

"And she worries herself over the housekeeping matters, the butcher's and the baker's bills, fearful of spending too much of her brother Jack's money: and their old servant Becky tyrannizes over her at will. Oh, I assure you it is quite an amusing household—but very delightful."

"And—you say, Philip, she is only a little girl."

"She looks like one."

"I should like to see her so much," repeated Frederica. "When will you take me there, Philip?"

"Oh, some day.——Your mother is speaking to you."

The studio remained in its accustomed place; but it missed its lately frequent visitor. For some days Philip Winterhalter did not appear at it. But one sunny afternoon when Mignonne sat working at the open window of her little bed-room, feeling all sad and lonely, a gay and grand carriage dashed up to the house. Mignonne saw silks and feathers, and looked from the window.

"Some visitors for Jack," she thought.

But at that moment she caught sight of Philip Winterhalter—he had been hidden by the parasols. He was looking handsomer than ever, as he got out of the carriage and handed out a tall, bright young lady, dressed in the height of fashion. The other lady, an elder one, seemed to say she should not get out, but wait in the carriage; and the two came into the house together.

"Mrs. and Miss Winterhalter," thought Mignonne. And she was right.

The latter and Philip found John Chandon at his work. He left it to show Miss Winterhalter his pictures. She went into raptures over them: wondered, admired, and criticised: after the manner of young ladies in artists' studios. Jack thought how pleasant she was: he liked her almost as much as he liked Philip.

"You have a little sister, I hear, Mr. Chandon," she said, drawing her flimsy mantle over her shoulders to depart. "Philip has told me of her. I was in hopes I should see her to-day.

"I'll go and find her," said Jack.

But he could not find her—and her bed-room door was bolted. Old Becky said she thought Miss Marget must have a headache and be lying down: she never fastened her door.

So, as no Mignonne could be found, Miss Winterhalter was obliged to content herself with a look at the sketch which her cousin produced from some mysterious hiding-place. "I really wish you painted portraits," was her last gracious remark to Jack, "I should surely have mine painted." And so she departed—her shimmering silks, her

filmy laces, her dainty gloves, and her almost impossible bonnet, making her the centre of attraction everywhere; and Philip attended her, and shared her glory.

The days went on. And, from only a chance look-in now and then, Philip Winterhalter grew to visit the studio and Jack again very frequently. He kept his secret well; never giving a hint that he and his cousin were, or would be, more than cousins. Was he satisfied with that prospect himself? He did not say. But, one thing was certain: whenever he could escape from the fashionable world and from his relatives' fashionable house and entourage, he did; and took refuge in the artist's plain home.

Frederica was nice, charming, in every way a model fiancée, but, somehow, he never felt quite at ease with her. There was nothing childish, unformed, or fresh about her; she had been "in society" until she was perfectly acquainted with its entrances, exits, and complications; and was a thorough young lady of the world in all respects.

Her cousin admired her, appreciated her beauty, her manners, and her conversation, and had fallen into the family arrangements without a murmur: for the family had made up the match, not he and she. He had been congratulated as a "lucky fellow" by his envious friends, and had taken it for granted that he was one indeed, without exerting himself to think much about it in any way. Latterly, however, he had begun to see things a little differently; to suspect that it was not in Frederica his happiness lay. Altogether, he was in a most uncertain frame of mind, and was glad to escape to Jack's for consolation.

"I don't know what I should do without a little friend like you," he said to Mignonne, during one of these hours of recuperation. "It's solid comfort to run away from everybody and come here for a while."

"Away from everybody," repeated Mignonne with wondering eyes. "Away from Miss Winterhalter?"

"Miss Winterhalter! What makes you bring up her name, Mignonne?"

"When Captain Blair was in the studio the other day, he said you were always with Miss Winterhalter: that you thought her divine, and that she was so."

"Captain Blair's a fool. I'd rather be here, child, than with Miss Winterhalter, divine though she is. One gets a bit of quiet here."

"Yes, it is quiet," sighed Mignonne. "And sometimes very lonely."

"Lonely!" echoed Philip. "Well, I daresay you do find it so," he added; "nobody but Jack and old Becky—and *he* always in his painting-room. Would you like to go to the opera, Mignonne?"

An eager flash from the sweet blue eyes. He could not mistake

the silent answer they gave—the momentary pleasure that illumined them.

"There is to be a grand performance on Thursday evening next. I will take you to it, child—if we can unearth Jack from his shell, and get his consent. Will you go?"

"Oh, yes, if Jack will but agree!" she cried. "What is the opera to be?"

"The Sonnambula."

"Oh, I like it! I know some of the airs. That last one is beautiful—'Do not mingle one human feeling.' My aunt never would take me to operas: she said they were not good for little girls, and too expensive, besides."

"We will go, then, Mignonne."

Jack's favour was gained; Jack consented to be at the trouble for once of putting himself into an evening coat and necktie. He demurred at first: but Mr. Winterhalter said a few judicious words about poor Mignonne's very few pleasures. So Philip secured a box and appointed to bring a carriage and call for them.

"But if your aunt and cousin should want you to take them the same night—what then?" asked Mignonne.

"My aunt and cousin will not be in town. They are going out on Thursday morning to stay till Saturday."

And perhaps—who knew?—in that absence lay the secret of Philip's offer to take them.

At the appointed hour Philip came, left the carriage, and ran up to the studio. It was locked; and he turned to the little sitting-room: in which sat Jack Chandon.

"Ready, Jack? Where's Mignonne?"

The opening of the door answered him. Philip stared. A young lady stood at it; but—was that Mignonne? Mignonne of the cotton frocks and undressed hair? Mignonne, the little girl?

It was Mignonne's face certainly, and Mignonne's golden hair. But the hair was no longer hanging behind, a silky mass of waves; it was braided and twisted in some glorious manner about her pretty head; one or two silken locks falling here and there over her shoulders. The cotton frock was supplanted by a prettily-fashioned dress, which, trailing behind her in soft folds, gave a new stateliness to her slender figure, and, as she stood there blushing and smiling, a sudden, unaccountable pain smote Philip Winterhalter's heart.

Mignonne was a child no longer; he had lost his little friend for ever.

"Do you not like me as well?" she said, putting out her hand half-timidly. "Jack did not know me at first. The dressmaker says I ought not to go on wearing those childish things—I am too old for them."

"I don't believe you are too old for them," rejoined Philip, in a sudden storm.

"I am quite nineteen, you know,"—this rather defiantly. "And so—and so—here I am."

"How beautiful she is," thought Philip, as he took her hand for a moment; and then—with a flash of dismay and anger, "What a fool I have been!—what a fearful and wonderful simpleton! She is not a child, as I have been foolishly pretending to myself; she's a woman. I love her better than the whole world. And there's Frederica!—and what on earth will come of it?"

All that evening he watched the lovely face as though in a dream. Not one word that was spoken around him, not one air sung on the stage did he hear or understand; he even answered Mignonne at random, and grew almost irritable when she laughed at his preoccupation, although he begged her pardon most humbly a minute after.

"See," she said suddenly, at the close of the first act, "there is your cousin, Mr. Winterhalter! She is bowing to you."

Truly, there was Frederica, languidly waving her fan in an opposite box, and smiling upon him graciously—looking at his companion meanwhile, through her glasses, with a certain sharp, curious admiration.

"How very beautiful she is!" said Mignonne. "But I thought you said they would be out of town?"

He was bowing to his cousin and aunt with an air of constraint. It struck Mignonne forcibly. All in a moment an instinct came to her—she knew he did not care, for some reason or other, to be seen there with her, now that Frederica was present. A crimson flush mantled to her very temples: hot tears filled her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Winterhalter!" she cried, in the moment's impulse, her lips quivering, "I am so sorry! I wish we had not come. But we can go home again—now."

He turned to her quite sharply; vexed that she should have read him so clearly. But he smoothed his face and told her she was quite misunderstanding him.

What on earth had brought those relatives of his here to-night, he wondered. Their visit out of town must have been put off. He tried to look at his ease, and to pay attention to the opera. Frederica kept smiling and nodding to him in the intervals of her conversation with Captain Blair—who sat by Frederica, as he often did. At the end of the next act, Philip, leaving Jack and Mignonne, made his way to their box, and Captain Blair quitted it. Mrs. Winterhalter looked rather grimmer than usual: Frederica was gracious in the extreme.

"Who is that, that you are with, Philip?" asked she.

"John Chandon."

"I know him. I mean the young lady."

"His sister."

"Why, you told me he had but one sister!"

"He has but one."

"Is she the one you call Mignonne?"

Philip nodded.

"Then what made you say she was a little girl?"

"I thought she was—till this evening," cried poor Philip, uneasily. "She wore cotton frocks and had her hair down her back."

Frederica laughed. "I don't see how you could have mistaken yonder young lady for a little girl, though she did wear her hair down her back, and a cotton frock."

"I'm sure I did," he said.

"I don't believe you, Philip. You are telling me a wretched story." And Miss Winterhalter flirted her fan saucily and looked inquisitively into his eyes. Whether he had told her a wretched story or not, he himself was feeling wretched—he knew that.

"Mamma," said she, "I am going for a few minutes to that opposite box. Yonder young lady is John Chandon's sister—and a flame of Philip's I fancy. Philip, you must take me."

There was no resisting her will. Mrs. Winterhalter sourly demanded to know what her daughter meant, and what she could be talking of. But Frederica coolly put her arm within her cousin's, and walked out of the box with him.

Mignonne, getting over her first shyness, was soon at ease with Miss Winterhalter. Jack stood at the back of the box while she stayed. Philip never opened his lips.

Philip Winterhalter sat communing with himself. How the world had changed to him in the last few hours! How bitterly hard it would be to go on with the old life! Frederica? Yes, he liked her very much as his cousin—but he should not like her as his wife, for he loved that child Mignonne.

"I will call and see you to-morrow at the studio, Miss Chandon," said Frederica, as she rose to return. "And you must come to see me: Philip will bring you. I hope we shall be good friends."

"How little she knows!" thought Philip.

"What in the name of wonder makes you so silent, Philip?" quoth she, as the box door was closed by Jack behind them and they found themselves in the lobby.

"Am I silent?"

"You stupid fellow! As if you did not know you were—and know the cause also. You are in love, sir, with that sweet girl."

"For goodness' sake don't talk nonsense, Frederica."

"Nonsense, you call it! Look here: why should you not honestly avow the truth to me? *I* am not going to have you, you know."

"What do you mean?"

"I will confess to you, as you won't to me. I am engaged to somebody else. I daresay you can guess who it is."

His face and lips were working with emotion. "Are—are you playing with me?" he hoarsely asked.

"Now, Philip, don't pretend to misunderstand me. No, sir, I am

not playing with you. It was all very well for our two wise mothers to make up a match between us; but I think they might have paid us the compliment to consult us first, don't you? You have not cared for me, sir, and I'm sure I have not cared—in that way—for you. Philip, I am serious," she added, brushing away a tear. "I like, and have long liked, somebody else. And I only wonder you have not seen it long ago."

"Captain Blair?"

"Just so. He and I would not, each, have anybody else for the world. We are privately engaged—and I hope my mother won't quite die of it. He is not as rich as you are, Philip: but he has enough—and I am an heiress, you know, in a small way. He means to ask you to be his best man."

"If we were not in this public place, I should like to give you a shower of cousin's kisses," breathed Philip, a strange joy in his tone.

"Keep them for Mignonne," laughed she. "*I* have suspected you: and so has Arthur Blair—he has seen you with her at the studio. But we must go in, Philip: mamma will be sending the boxkeeper after me."

Captain Blair was with Mrs. Winterhalter again. Philip pressed his hand: "Your best man," he whispered. "Heaven prosper and bless you both!"

"All right," nodded Captain Blair. "The same to you, old friend."

Philip Winterhalter went back to his own box by-and-by. Jack, leaning over Mignonne's shoulder, was listening attentively to the singing. The opera was approaching its close.

"Jack," he whispered, "she's a woman now, not a girl."

"I know it—I see it," said Jack, rather ruefully. "I'm afraid I shall have to get the old aunt to live with us."

"No, you will not—don't fash yourself. Will you give her to me."

"What, the old aunt?"

"Mignonne."

"Give—Mignonne—to—you!" uttered Jack, from the depth of his astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Only that. I want a wife, Chandon, and I want that wife to be Mignonne."

"But you are going to marry Miss Winterhalter."

"Not a bit of it. Miss Winterhalter marries somebody else—yon martial cavalier by her side. I must have Mignonne—or nobody."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Jack Chandon, too much amazed for other words. "Little Mignonne!"

Mr. Winterhalter was already whispering into Mignonne's ear. He watched the changing of the sweet countenance, as she listened to him: the blushes, pink as rosy morn, that tinged her cheeks; the gladness stealing into the eyes.

"But—poor Jack?" she faintly breathed. "How lonely he will be. And there's his housekeeping!—and the accounts! Becky's nobody."

"You shall go and see Jack every day," he answered. "Jack shall be my brother as well as yours, Mignonne. And we will keep his accounts together."

The house was rising. The final air, which she so loved, and to which she only knew the English words, floated on her ear.

> "Do not mingle one human feeling
> With the blisses o'er each sense stealing"—

Ah, never before had the song brought to her heart this rapture! never hereafter would she love any other song as she loved this.

A. L. F.

HER VALENTINE.

UNDER the tardy wakening skies,
Down the path where the lime-boughs meet,
Little Lucette with laughing eyes,
Little Lucette with flying feet.

Aye, but the morn is chill and bleak,
Boughs are barren, and skies are grey,
Frosty the wind that fans her cheek;
Little Lucette, then whither away?

Yester-even she breathed a prayer—
Little Lucette—to a certain saint,
Thinking, I'll warrant, nobody there,
For light in the church was growing faint.

But somebody heard, somebody told,
Little Lucette had whispered low—
"Saint Valentine, grant I may behold
My own true love, when I shall go

"To-morrow down to the wicket gate
At dawning, ere the shadows flee,
In trembling hope to learn my fate
Of thee, sweet Valentine, of thee!"

Hasten, Lucette, for even now
He stands beside the very place;
Ah, see the blush upon her brow,
The dimples, and the slackened pace.

Dear maid! she'll evermore declare
She knelt not vainly at the shrine,
And after all it was her prayer
That sent Lucette her Valentine.

SYDNEY GREY.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. J. SWAIN.

After Five Years.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW ALICE KERR SOLD A PICTURE.

A FINE afternoon in the regions of South Kensington, sun in the streets, warmth and brightness within doors. Especially bright were the handsome drawing-rooms of Mrs. Hartley Carroll; and very bright indeed looked that young lady herself, as she stood there with her sister, Edith Leicester, and their guest, Alice Kerr; the latter timid as inexperienced girl can be, while waiting for the coming company—who might perhaps be asked to inspect the drawings of her dead father.

"You must not expect a crowd, Alice," said Mrs. Carroll. "I like to see people able to turn round; but I daresay you will find some one pleasant to speak to. It is the rule that everybody comes here to be pleasant. If you meet with anyone who is dull you may tell me."

"Am I to tell the parties themselves?"

"Of course; I see you are intelligent."

"I am frightened enough as it is."

"What in the world are you frightened about? Don't you know that people expect something out of the way from a real genius? Let me look at you, Alice. Not so bad, considering. Come, Edith, tell me if you do not think my morning's work satisfactory?"

Edith smiled and approved; but with an amount of reserve that, when Alice's eyes and ears were absorbed in a large volume of Spanish photographs, made Tiny observe, in a tone of pique, "You might give me some credit, I think, for doing so much on such short notice!"

"Credit?" repeated Edith, significantly.

"Oh! that is the grievance, is it? Why, Madame Delphine took it as a matter of course; so, if she is satisfied, we ought to be."

"When she, and others, *are* satisfied, I shall have no more to say."

"Well, that may be sooner than they expect. It depends on how the wind blows. I cannot help being uneasy. Hartley tells me things are in a very uncomfortable state, and that we may double our income this year."

"Double your income! Is that what makes you uneasy?"

"Yes; because there is another possibility—we may lose more than half what we have already."

"My dear child, are you in earnest?" asked Edith.

"Sad and sober earnest: but we are not going to tell anybody but yourself."

"I wish I could advise—or help you."

"I wish you could. If you were the rich woman you were meant to be, I believe you could do Hartley a good turn, for it all hangs on his maintaining his credit."

"Clare, you know whatever I have is yours; do let us see what can be done towards retrenching and clearing off difficulties. I have been afraid of this some time, and I have been saving all I could in case ——"

"Hush! Thank you with all my heart, but I am not going to pay my extravagance out of your economy. There are other ways of helping me—but you must find them out for yourself."

The entry of visitors, and of Hartley himself, looking as easy and good-humoured as if he had not a care in the world, cut short this dialogue, and distracted the attention of both sisters; but, in the interest of the topic, they had both forgotten Alice's vicinity, and had raised their voices sufficiently for her to hear more than she could understand, though quite enough to give her a pang of consternation. Edith, as she turned to seat the guests, read the young expressive face in a moment, and saw that they had been overheard. She took the first opportunity, and laid her hand on Alice's shoulder.

"Don't look so unhappy, dear—there is no cause."

"Oh, Edith, I didn't mean to listen—I couldn't help hearing something. Not much—only——"

"Only the old story of the town and country mouse. Our happiness does not depend on all these things. Your art is worth them all. You are richer than any of us."

"I wish I could see that, and what your happiness did depend upon, for I would do anything to get hold of it," said Alice to herself, as Miss Leicester passed on. "It is nonsense to say I am richer than they are—papa was greater than I shall ever be, and he was miserably poor. Here comes Sir Jesse Strahan. How eagerly he goes up to her, and is telling her something while he holds her hand. I am sure he admires her with all his heart, and they say he is immensely rich. I wonder——"

Her imagination once set to work, she soon arrived at a point not far from the truth: it rested with Edith to help her sister with the riches of Sir Jesse Strahan, and Edith's high spirit shrank from encouraging him under the circumstances.

"Well, Miss Kerr, what are you studying so deeply?" asked Hartley Carroll, coming up to the table near which she was sitting.

"I was thinking about Sir Jesse Strahan," said Alice, intrepidly. "May I ask you something—or is it a liberty, when he is your friend?"

"Miss Kerr, this is Liberty Hall, as Mr. Hardcastle would say. Give your own orders, and we are all your slaves. What can I tell you?"

"Is Sir Jesse Strahan very rich and very good?"

"Humph! You have a great deal of curiosity. He is rich enough always to have money in his pocket; he is good enough always to keep up the appearance of being so. Will that do?"

"Not quite."

"Then you must ask others of his acquaintance. The real fact is, Miss Kerr, that I believe in the hands of anyone he really cared for and could thoroughly respect, he might do a lot of good—he has the means and the opportunities—plenty of them. Anyone who could lead him at all might perhaps lead him right."

His voice had dropped; his manner became more earnest than Alice had seen it yet. The next moment he was laughing and chatting with some young ladies who had just come in, and whom Mrs. Carroll brought up to make acquaintance with Miss Kerr.

"No, no, Miss Ford, we are not to have any private views; everything with us is conducted on mercenary principles. The drawings will not be shown till one of our amateurs comes, who has bespoken the first offer, and when he is here we shall have an open exhibition and auction, like the scene in the 'School for Scandal.' I mean to do Careless for once, though it is not my character, as you all know."

"Don't speak too confidently, Mr. Carroll," said Helen Ford, laughing; "here is Miss Kerr looking unconvinced, at any rate. Miss Kerr," she continued, turning to Alice as Hartley passed on to receive some new comers, "Mrs. Carroll told me of your courage and spirit in coming over as you did, to be independent and make yourself a name. I admire it the more that I could never have done it myself. Where do you mean to have a studio?"

"I don't know," said Alice, "they are all so kind to me that I have done nothing but amuse myself. I must begin soon to work—Sir Jesse Strahan talked of my studying in the School of Art for a little while, and that he could procure me some introductions."

"Ah, well, take care—he is rather dangerous as a patron. He expects something in return for whatever he does. That is the world's fashion of doing kindnesses."

"I don't think so at all," said Alice, stoutly; "and even if true, it

would be delicious to do something for those who are so good to you—and the more difficult, the better I should be pleased."

"You think so now—it is natural at your age. A little later, and you will begin to see as Jaques thought, however mildly he put it :—

> "All the world's a sham,
> And all the people in it live by shamming.
> They take their turns at taking in each other."

"Oh, don't, Miss Ford! I've heard that sort of thing before, and I can't bear it. Some gentlemen once came to see my father who talked as you do, and they said that all the old beliefs were dying out in art, in history, in politics, in religion—and that nothing would soon be left us worth quarrelling about, as these things never could revive again."

"And what said your father in return?"

"He said very little to them, only smoked his pipe, and smiled. But when I asked him about it afterwards, he took his brush and sketched such a charming little figure of Mrs. Partington sweeping the tide out of her back-door! I have got it still. 'There, child,' he said, 'the new brooms may be as busy as they like, but the Atlantic will still roll on, when all's said and done.'"

"Epigrammatic, certainly, but shallow, as all such answers are. However, your father was quite right to leave your young romantic belief unshaken. The happiest time is while we do believe. All looks very bright to you just now, does it not?"

"Well, it is very nice being here, though I know it cannot last; but it was not at all bright yesterday morning, I can tell you."

And encouraged by her companion's look of curiosity, Alice told her adventure, and had the satisfaction of thoroughly interesting her listener.

Miss Ford's cheeks, which had been rather pale, were now of a bright red, and her eyes began to glitter.

"Gabriel Bruce returned to England—and expected here? Clare never mentioned that. How was he looking? Careworn, or as if he had been ill?"

"Not a bit of it. He looked all strength, kindness, and courage. He was eager to be in England to keep an appointment, and I believe he has been making money; I am—there he is!"

And as she spoke, the group nearest the door was seen to divide. Gabriel appeared, and was shaking hands with Hartley Carroll.

Yes, it was true what Miss Ford said—the world did look bright to Alice Kerr at that moment; the sight of that face had filled the room with magic radiance, and she stood, trembling and glowing with excitement, waiting for his eyes to turn her way, that she might enjoy the delight of being recognised in what she felt to be such favourable circumstances. She longed to call him by name—every second of delay was intolerable to her impatience, and people would

come between them, and stop him to talk and answer questions. There—now he was looking—he saw her—oh, what a look that was! A moment of bewildering joy—and she had almost sprung forward.

That look, with its electric flash lighting up his whole face, was not at her, but at some one just behind her, whose hand involuntarily grasped that of Alice, and she felt every finger quiver with some deep emotion, the stronger for being so forcibly kept back. No need to turn and examine the face—that pressure of the hand was the answer to the look, and Alice understood, as artist and poet intuitively do understand when the language is that of the heart.

"Alice," said the voice of her friend, and it only shook a very little, "there is Mr. Bruce. I wonder if he will know you."

"He will hardly trouble himself to see whether I am in the room," muttered Alice. Her fairyland had suddenly changed, and she was bewildered by the whirl of dust and dead leaves which filled the place of the dazzling vision. Mechanically, however, she moved forward as Edith drew her on, and saw, as if in a dream, how she and Gabriel met. It was almost in silence—they looked into each other's eyes, and their hands joined for a moment, then Edith hurriedly thanked him for his care of Miss Kerr, and Mr. Bruce, with a smile, disclaimed all merit—the pleasure had been entirely on his side. And he turned to his fellow-traveller of the day before, and shook hands so kindly, she could only return the greeting with as much warmth as possible, and then stand and listen to the other two.

It seemed difficult for them to converse; a few questions passed, which anybody might have overheard; and Gabriel's eyes were now under better control, and only betrayed their master by dancing with light. Edith, her whole frame thrilling with an ecstasy that terrified but completely mastered her, had never looked more lovely. Eyes, lips, cheeks, were as if a statue had been touched by a wizard's finger, and were still quivering with the new-born life—her sadness and thoughtfulness had rolled away like a cloud, and she had forgotten everything for the moment but that Gabriel had returned, and that he had never loved but her. The wrong she had done him was forgiven—if a wrong it had been. The five years' exile had ended in his complete triumph, and he had come to claim his reward.

Oh, if he could but be alone with her for a moment!

But appearances had to be kept up, and with all these eyes and ears watching them, it was safest to talk of Alice Kerr; and Alice found herself, presently, the centre of so much agreeable and flattering notice, as the company took part in Gabriel's welcome, that her spirits revived—she even thought her judgment had been deceived; perhaps they were only friends after all; and if it were otherwise, what difference could it make to her? It was only an idiot who could have dreamed such a dream as hers had been—and she should take care never to dream it again—never! And when Gabriel thanked her, as he did with fervour the first moment he could,

for winning him this pleasant reception, she kept her resolution by making him a little set speech about gratitude—in the middle of which she caught Miss Ford's eye, and the words died on her lips.

"What is it—are you feeling tired?" he said, in that kindly tone she thought so sweet. "Here is a chair—you are not quite rested after your journey, I am afraid."

"Yes, I am—my journey was delightful. Mr. Bruce, I want to ask you something. Is it true that people are beginning to find out that everything is a sham?"

"What things, Miss Kerr?"

"Well, every good thing—art—religion—gratitude—romance."

He smiled at the mixture. "Who has been saying so?"

"Miss Ford. There she is, just behind you. She seemed to think it was only my ignorance that made me think those things real."

He turned, and looked at Helen Ford. She had not joined in the groups that bade him welcome, but she came forward now and held out her hand. As in duty bound, he took it in his own, but the bow with which he relinquished it was more polite than friendly.

"England must be a changed country," he observed, "if she has learned to do without two, at least, of these. Even if art and romance should be driven away to happier shores, I should be sorry to stay in her if she had neither gratitude nor religion."

"Bruce!" called out Hartley Carroll, "here is our friend Sir Jesse Strahan describing an aboriginal you have tamed and brought home. Where have you housed him?"

"I beg Sir Jesse Strahan's pardon," said Gabriel, courteously going forward. "I owe him thanks for his kindness in calling on me last night, and leaving Mrs. Carroll's invitation. My intention was to acknowledge his politeness in person the first opportunity."

"Then here he is, my dear fellow, and it is high time you met, for you are rivals in a fair field, where a lady holds the prize," said Hartley, unconscious of the double truth his words conveyed, while he was busily unfastening Alice Kerr's precious portfolio. "Miss Kerr, you are wanted here," he continued. "No one must touch these without your permission."

The company crowded round the easel on which the portfolio was placed, and there was a general murmur at the fading light. Mrs. Carroll rang the bell, and lamps were quickly brought in and candles lighted. Hartley turned to the footman as he was leaving the room.

"Are Mr. Bruce's servants below?"

"No, sir."

"Bruce, why didn't you bring them? I thought you were inseparable from your followers, and I want to see these treasures."

"They are gone on business into the country," said Gabriel.

"There are two of them, then?" observed Sir Jesse. "I only saw one—a very remarkable person he appeared to me. Has he any past history likely to give him trouble?"

"All I know of his past history is so much to his honour, Sir Jesse, that I feel satisfied he has nothing to be ashamed of in the rest."

"He gave me the impression that he had a history and would rather not tell it," said Sir Jesse, drily, putting up his gold eye-glasses as the first drawing was placed on the easel. Gabriel bit his lips, and stroked his moustache reflectively. Instead of looking at the picture, he took a silent survey of the rival competitor, in whose tone he had detected a ring of hostility beyond what would be justified by the circumstances.

"Are you really bold enough, Mr. Bruce, to bid against Sir Jesse Strahan?" asked the clear metallic voice of Helen Ford, as she stood at his elbow. The question was audible to most of the guests, and ears were pricked up with the expectation of an entertaining scene.

"I had no such ambition, Miss Ford," was the calm reply. "I believe I was the first bidder—was it not so, Miss Kerr?"

"It was, indeed," replied Alice.

"This is really first-rate," said Hartley, examining the sketch. "Now then, Bruce, out with your gold-dust; I stand here as Miss Kerr's representative and trustee. We mean to make you pay handsomely for the private view."

"But I am ignorant of these matters," replied Gabriel; "therefore the full value must be estimated by some better judge than I. Perhaps Sir Jesse Strahan will favour us with his opinion? At whatever price he fixes, I am ready to make my selection."

Sir Jesse bowed; looked at the ladies, to see if they confirmed this request; smiled benignantly at Alice, and then at the rest of the company—a smile which implied that such a task was simple enough to him, though it might be hard to anyone else.

"Let us see them all, and compare them," he said, authoritatively: and the three studies from Walter Scott were set up in favourable lights, and a murmur of approbation passed round. Alice's eyes filled with tears, and Edith's hand stole quietly round her shoulders.

"Can you give us any idea, Miss Kerr, about the price the lamented artist was in the habit of receiving for sketches like these?" asked Sir Jesse—more to gain time than because he cared for the information.

"I can, indeed," said she, almost with a sob; "they took his work at a twentieth part of its worth, and then sold it at a large profit. The dealer offered me twenty pounds for the three. I said I would starve first."

"You were perfectly right; they are worth much more. My own opinion, which you must take only at its correct value—I may be wrong—but my decided opinion is that the three ought to fetch seven hundred pounds—that is, three hundred and fifty for Marmion, two hundred for Rokeby, and one hundred and fifty for the View of Melrose. I should like to know if the gentlemen present agree with me."

"I, for one, and perhaps the one most immediately concerned, beg to differ from you, Sir Jesse," said Gabriel.

"Indeed, sir? Well, I can only repeat what I have said, and if you were not aware of what you were undertaking, I am sorry for your disappointment. Any real judge will tell you the same, and I advise Miss Kerr not to part with them for less."

"You mistake me, Sir Jesse; *my* opinion is that one of these sketches is decidedly estimated below the mark. You say they are worth seven hundred for the set; I say seven hundred is not too much for the Rokeby, and I choose it, with Miss Kerr's leave, at that price. Not a penny under."

"Bravo!" shouted Hartley, and all the room rang with applause.

The gold eye-glasses slipped through Sir Jesse's fingers; his sallow complexion grew dark, and his brow contracted with rage. He turned upon Gabriel as if he had been an unruly official, whom a word would humble and dismiss; but recovered himself with a sarcastic bend of the head. "I understood this was a simple affair of business; I had no idea that the imaginative faculty was to be called into play. Heavy prices are not in my line; I know something about the market value of works of art among ourselves; but colonial magnificence, whether of mind or money, is beyond my experience altogether."

"I pretend to no other knowledge in the matter beyond knowing what I admire," said Mr. Bruce, "and the price I offer Miss Kerr is the proof of my admiration. She has been good enough to give me my choice among the pictures, and I have made it."

He lifted the sketch from the easel, and laid it aside with the composure of one who felt he was in the right. Tiny, who was standing close to Sir Jesse, perceived that he was trembling from head to foot. She glanced at her sister, and thought she had never seen her look so lovely. The soft light in her downcast eyes, the half-smile playing on her lips, the glow of sensibility on her cheeks, were all the more striking that she was entirely unconscious of their being so. Her thoughts were not in the scene around her, but had flown back to one of years past; and it was with a start that she woke from her reverie to answer a laughing remark of Helen Ford's on the lamentable ignorance of the present day. Here were three of the party present who had just confessed they had never read "Rokeby," and had no idea what that picture was about. What could one do to such people? Mr. Burlington Ford was asked to sing that new arrangement of 'A weary lot is thine, fair maid:' and Gabriel found a moment to address Alice.

"You are satisfied, I hope?" he said, kindly.

"No, I am not," was her abrupt answer. "If the picture is only worth two hundred, I don't see why you are to pay seven."

"If the picture is worth seven to me, I don't see why I am to cheat you out of five. To tell you the truth, I think your pompous-

looking connoisseur there wanted setting down. He was fixing a price at his own pleasure, and ridiculously low. Don't part with either of the others on his terms—you will get the full price, I am convinced, in time."

"You are right," said Hartley, "and, what is more, I expect to hear you get an offer for this, Bruce, before you are many days older. If Strahan had his eye on it, and I think he had, he will never rest till he has made it his own."

"His unquiet spirit may prepare, then, for a long journey, for not a finger shall he lay on that masterpiece. I am going to bespeak its frame directly. I say, Carroll, shall any of you be at home this evening?"

"I never know what is to become of me after dinner. You had better come and dine. I suppose you and Miss Kerr have accounts to settle?"

"Yes, indeed," said Alice, eagerly. "You know, Mr. Bruce, you were my banker yesterday—how long ago it seems!"

"Your banker? Oh! I see, I may not presume to take the liberty of a friend. Well, I shall hope to deserve more in time. I will bring your account, Miss Kerr, and hand you over the balance. I owe you much—a great deal more than you are aware of," he added, in a low voice, as Hartley moved away. "You have helped me to an hour of such happiness as I have longed for—I cannot tell you how intensely. You must go into what is really a thirsty land to appreciate the simile of panting for the water-brooks."

"Is this your appointment, then?" asked Alice, suppressing a sigh. There was such a charm in his confidence that she could not resist seeking for more.

"Your quick perception becomes you. But you must remember this. I have only hope at present—I ought to hold my tongue on the subject; but we seem to be like old friends, and I cannot help wishing for your sympathy."

"You have it, indeed," she said, with girlish sincerity. It never occurred to her that it would be perilous work to give sympathy where she might learn to wish for more in return. She did sympathise with him, she thought; at least, she liked him to single her out as his confidante, and to know he looked upon her as on a friend of old standing; and she owed him so much gratitude that this was the least she could do to show it. Instinctively, she had learned that the road to his regard would now be through his passion for Edith—though the name had not been spoken; and she felt at the moment that for two such friends to be united ought to be great happiness for herself.

Her eyes, the most attractive feature in her face, were full of warmth and gratitude as she looked up at her protector of the day before; and she received an immediate reward in the kind glance they met in return.

"I was rather proud of coming back to England with two good friends," he said, "and now I can say I returned with three."

He took leave, after saying this, without having exchanged more than a dozen words with Miss Leicester the whole time.

"What was Mr. Bruce saying to you, little one?" asked Tiny. Alice told her frankly. Mrs. Carroll was silent for a minute, and glanced across the room, where Sir Jesse was detaining Edith.

"He may have gained another friend, and so may we," she said, "but I am very much mistaken if we have not all made an enemy."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW GRACE FETCHED A PARCEL.

"If you please, Miss Edith," said Nurse Ellis, "Grace Pyne would be glad to speak to you before she goes. I've given her some tea, and she's got on so well with Miss Kerr's work now that she can finish it at home."

"Send her up to me."

It was by no slight effort of unselfishness that Edith Leicester said this: the tumult of feelings she had undergone during the last four-and-twenty hours had culminated when Gabriel departed without any words to support the eloquence of his look. That he would speak that evening she felt assured, but how long it seemed to wait, after all she had silently undergone—and how difficult it was to think of anyone but him! "Clare was wrong—I know it"—this was the inward cry of her heart; but until he had spoken, the possibility must still remain. Another subject lay on her mind, besides, though of far less interest; Sir Jesse had given her to understand that, from her manner the evening before, he had dared to hope as he had never hoped till then, and life had assumed a new colouring which it would be almost death to change. What had she done, or said, in the sharp pain of that one evening, to give him such an impression? Oh, for a few minutes in peace, to think all this over, and relieve her full heart with prayer!

"Come in, Grace," she said, kindly, as the latter stopped to curtsy at the door. "Sit down, and tell me what I can do for you? Do you wish for some money on account?"

"You are very kind, ma'am, very—but it isn't that. It's about Lucy, ma'am. She has a wish to better herself. If it is for her good, I won't be against it. But I can't be sure. You don't think the theatres are good places for young girls, do you, ma'am?"

"The theatres? Has she taken a fancy in that direction?"

"Yes, ma'am, ever since we have had work to do for one of them; and one of the acting ladies tells Lucy she would just do for their line, and would get to the top of the tree in no time; and Lucy, girl like, is taken with the notion, and sees no harm in it. Lucy could

earn an honest living in service, and be safe in it, under God's blessing. I'd rather she was in a lady's kitchen, or nursery, than turn actress."

"I understand," said Edith, patiently. "You want a situation for Lucy?"

"I wouldn't presume to ask you to take so much trouble, Miss Leicester, only you are so good, and you told me always to come to you first, when I wanted advice or help, ma'am—and so, being here to-day, I thought I would just ask you, instead of trying to see Mr. Forrest—his time is so taken up now, with Lent coming on so near, and the district getting fuller every day. Mrs. Honest tells me herself that he never seems to get his natural rest now, night nor day. He does the work of ten."

"I am afraid that is too true, Grace. Tell Lucy, from me, that I agree with you in recommending service rather than the stage, and that I will look out for a situation such as she will like. It is possible"—a tell-tale blush tinged her cheek, "just possible that I may find one sooner than she thinks. I will speak to Mrs. Carroll. But what shall you do, Grace, if you are left alone? Shall you try service too?"

"I have thought of that, ma'am, more than once, and perhaps it would be better in some ways; but then, you see, ma'am, it would go very hard with me to give up having a corner of my own in case poor Darch Williams should come back. Sometimes I think he never will, and that it's only in the next world I shall see him again; but whenever I've tried to set about giving him up, something seems to rise in my heart to tell me he is still alive, and I get listening to every step on the stairs, as if it might be his, coming up to knock at my door."

"But, Grace, with all the changes that have taken place, how would he know where to find you?"

"Well, ma'am, that's just what it is; if I were to move away anywhere else, he might never find me; but there's an old lady, who is a fast friend of his—she knows where I live, and if he should come back he's safe to go to her. She nursed him when he was little, and still keeps to her ham and beef shop—it is Granny Hughes. I'm sure I thank you kindly for listening to me as you do, Miss Leicester."

"Go home now, my dear Grace, finish Miss Kerr's work, and say to Lucy that she is not to make any plans or engagements till she has heard from me. Mrs. Ellis has something packed up for her supper, if you can manage to carry it."

Cheered by the kindness of her young lady—as Edith Leicester was usually styled in her district—Grace Pyne returned to her humble home, expecting to find Lucy waiting to welcome her. But no Lucy was there. Grace thought she had most likely gone to take their finished work home, and receive the pay. She spread the table with the dainties in her basket given her at Mrs. Carroll's, and then went

to pay their fellow-lodger, old Mr. Martin, the visit he had so particularly requested.

"I'll be bound that Mrs. Dennis has never been near him: it's too bad, paid regularly as she is!"

With this reflection she took her working-apron in her hand, and tapping at the old man's door, was admitted by Mrs. Dennis herself; who, having been more of a defaulter than usual, was evidently revenging herself on her conscience and her employer at once, by making the room more uncomfortable.

"What, it's yourself, Miss Pyne? Come along, then, and welcome, only mind you don't trip over my dust-pan. It's right busy we are, you see—I never did come across a place that gathered the dirt as these here model houses does—but some folks must be waited upon as if they had a dozen servants. Yes, Mr. Martin, sir," at the top of her voice, "I was just a-saying, this here 'andsome furniture do take such a time rubbing of it. Oh, yes, I know all about it—you want your supper, and it's high time you had it, so I'll just clear up as I go, and get it all ready. There now!"—with an assumed appearance of consternation—"if I haven't been and forgot your bit of steak at the butcher's. It's too late for it now, so I'll run round to Granny Hughes's shop, and get you a plate of her ham and beef."

"Be quick, Mrs. Dennis," said Grace, good-humouredly: and as soon as the woman had departed, she went to work with a will, restoring order and comfort with every touch. The old man, who had sat smoking a quaint German pipe in silence during the tumult of Mrs. Dennis's performance, gradually ceased as he watched his favourite visitor, and laid the pipe down.

Nobody but Mr. Forrest knew anything of old Mr. Martin's history: except that he had seen better days, the traces of which were evident in his dress, his habits, the old-fashioned pieces of furniture, and the books in their once handsome bindings. It was known, too, that he had money at interest somewhere, for twice a year his dividends came in—a much grander thing than weekly wages: and what impressed the public mind more deeply even than the money was the fact that the postman was constantly bringing him long grey envelopes on matters of business, generally with proposals for investing large sums in lucrative undertakings. This was known to the inmates of the lodging-house, and many a discussion had been privately held as to whether Mr. Martin might not be a man of great wealth, choosing to live alone because he was eccentric, and hoarding sovereigns and bank-notes in his bedding and chimney-corner.

Grace had just made all tidy, had brightened up the fire and laid the cloth, when he suddenly spoke. "That idiot always forgets what I tell her—why, it's Shrove Tuesday, and I have not got my pancake. I must and will have my pancake, Grace. Seventy years have I never missed a pancake on Shrove Tuesday, and I'm not going to begin now. It will be the unluckiest year of my life if I do."

"Dear heart alive, sir, you sha'n't be unlucky if a pancake will hinder it. I'll make you one myself." Mr. Martin gave a nod, and resumed his pipe. It was curiously carved, and evidently belonged to the same period as the furniture which took so long to polish properly.

"Grace, that sister of yours grows very pretty."

"So she does, sir," said Grace, well pleased with the compliment.

"Why isn't she at home at this hour? Young girls should not go roaming about the streets alone. I can tell you this, my girl: you might as well throw that child into the Thames at once, as send her about London streets in the dark."

"I've been thinking of getting her a situation, Mr. Martin."

"Ah, indeed! Have you heard of any?"

"No, sir—but it is just possible—you won't repeat what I tell you?" He gave another nod by way of promise. "Well, the servants at Mr. Carroll's say that a very rich gentleman is always paying Miss Leicester attentions, and they think it is most likely she will have him, sooner or later; and if she has a house of her own, I am sure she will stretch a point for Lucy. But it's only servants' talk," added Grace, with a touch of compunction at having gossiped about her kind friend, even to so safe a confidant as Mr. Martin.

"What is the man's name?"

"Sir Jesse Strahan," said Grace, pouring her batter into the frying-pan. The pipe dropped from old Martin's hand, and rolled on the floor. Grace, absorbed in her culinary labour, turned to observe the old man's agitation. He was sitting with both hands clutching the arms of his chair, and the veins of his face swollen with the effort to speak. Setting everything down before the fire, she flew to his assistance, and administered a few drops of brandy, which in a few minutes restored his speech.

"Dear heart, sir, what a turn you gave me! You've been fasting too long, that you have. Now, do sit up and eat your pancake—it's hot and brown and nice, and all ready. What is it? The pipe? Oh, dear me, it's broken. Now, I do call that a pity."

"Let it be," said the old man; "it is only what has happened to better things before now—the mention of that name was quite enough. I've seen the day when the happiness of a whole life, and the lives of others depending upon it, were shivered to atoms in a moment—and that man the cause. If you've told me one secret, I've given you another in return. Let your Lucy run over these wicked streets every day in the week, and take her chance of an angel shutting the mouths of evil ones; but don't let her, or anyone you care for, eat the bread of Jesse Strahan!"

He was trembling all over, the dew stood on his forehead; Grace, startled as she was by his manner and words, concealed her own feelings, coaxed him to eat, and herself placed the coveted dainty on his plate; but though he tried to please her, his hunger and his taste seemed to be gone. He swallowed a few morsels, and

then pushed it all from him, just as Mrs. Dennis came in with her purchase. Her greedy eye took in the whole situation in a moment.

"I haven't been long, Miss Pyne, now, have I? And your sister, she's just run upstairs before me, and hopes to find her supper ready. There, now I'll take care of the dear old gentleman—you mustn't mind his not fancying his pancake just because I didn't make it. And, I say, my deary," following Grace into the passage, and putting a finger mysteriously on her arm, "Granny Hughes asked me to let you know, if you'd look round to-night, that she's got a parcel for you. Somebody's been and left it, and it's to be given into your own hands, or I'd have brought it; and she says you'd better fetch it directly, for fear it wouldn't keep."

Grace took her supper hastily with Lucy, and was soon hurrying towards Granny Hughes's. There were several customers in the little shop, whom Mrs. Hughes and a stout young woman, her granddaughter, were busily engaged in serving. At the sight of Grace the young one nodded knowingly; but it took some minutes to make the old lady comprehend who was come, and why.

"Passel?" she repeated, in the shrill key in which she was accustomed to hold her own in the war of words, "I ain't got nobody to send out with no passels. If people can't carry ——"

"It's me, Granny—Grace Pyne," said the visitor. "You sent word you had a parcel to give me."

"Grace Pyne, is it? Eh, dear! and so it be. Oh, yes, I've got *your* passel, sure enough, my dear life; and a precious one it be. Just you step into my parlour a minute—you light her, 'Liza, while I mind the shop; it is nigh upon closing-time, and then I'll come to you, Grace, if you don't mind waiting."

Preceded by 'Liza, whose candle was of no small service in steering the way through the miscellany of articles that choked up the passage, Grace Pyne passed on into the parlour, by courtesy so called. It was a little den of a room, where a fire had been recently lighted, but with so little effect that a man was in the act of stooping over the grate, endeavouring to brighten it up with wisps of paper. He grumbled audibly as 'Liza approached.

"I'd sooner camp out a dozen nights running, with the hoar-frost on my blanket every morning, than be stifled in such an old soot-bag as this!" he said, without turning round; but as the girl, instead of replying, turned up the gas, he became aware of the presence of her companion, now standing motionless in the middle of the room.

"If you'll just sit down, Miss Pyne, Granny will come to you directly. You'd best let that fire alone, Mr. Jones—you'll only make it worse. There! she's a-screaming after me already, as if I'd come here for my own pleasure. Coming, Granny! coming!" and snatching up her candle again, she obeyed the shrill summons, leaving the two alone.

Grace, whose limbs shook under her so that she could hardly sup-

port herself, sat down as requested, her eyes fixed on the stranger—so like, and yet so unlike, the image stamped on her faithful heart. The hair, the beard, the spectacles, all baffled memory and cheated hope: and yet, something in the set of the shoulders, and, above all, in the voice, made her heart beat so that she could not utter a word. He sat silent for a few moments, rose, and turned the key of the door.

"Grace," he whispered. She clasped her hands, with a faint cry.

"Grace—you have not forgotten me, then?"

"Oh, who *are* you?" she faltered. "I thought one minute—but now I seem all wrong again. Who are you?

"Poor Darch Williams," added he, in the tones she had so often pined to hear once more. "Wait a moment, till I cast this skin, and then you shall judge for yourself."

He cautiously removed the wig, the whiskers, the spectacles, that had disguised his features before, and showed her a face marked with wild living and exposure, hardened, aged, altered in every line, but still the living face she had mourned as lost, if not dead, gazing into her own with a tender confidence that at once blotted out all misgivings. Not a word of reproach for his cruel silence—not a question or doubt as to the reason of his return: her only thought at that moment was of joy and thankfulness; and falling into his arms, she clung to his breast, weeping with ecstasy, and murmuring praise to God.

He held her in his grasp, and kissed her again and again.

"Why, Grace, my darling, I made almost certain you'd have given me up. I meant you to. When I found this place too hot to hold me, that I must run or be ruined, was I going to tie you down with promises to a man who might never be able to come back and claim them? But I find you my own true girl, the same as I left you"—Grace shook her head—"the same in heart, anyhow."

"How could you wish me to forget you?" said Grace, with a little touch of wounded feeling. "Didn't I know they were all falsehoods that were spread about you, and that you would come back when you could to clear up your good name? and didn't I vow to myself, with the Lord's help, that if I were alive to see the day, you should find one at least who believed in you? Our parting is over; and though I am not so young as I was, Darch, I'm as true to you as ever, and what we have to do is to set about making you straight and clear before the world."

"All right, my darling girl, all in good time; but there'll be a deal to think about and talk of before that can be done; and I must tell you at once that, until it *is* done, not a soul but you and Granny must know me, except as Mr. Jones. Promise me that, Grace."

"If it must be, I promise. But it won't be for long, will it?"

"How long will depend on our own cleverness and good luck, my dear girl. I know you will do what you can for me. You won't stick at a trifle to help me at a pinch, Grace?"

"You wouldn't ask me to do anything wrong. You wouldn't do it, Darch, would you, after all that's come and gone?"

He bit his lip. "You were always too good for me, dear," he said, gently, "and since we parted I've been knocking about among a lot that don't just go by the Church Catechism. And if I've led a rough life, it's not my fault, but theirs that drove me to it. And driven I was, Grace, and the only wonder is that I have not turned out worse than I am."

He walked to the grate, and stirred the fire fiercely. Grace watched him anxiously, then crept to his side, and stole the rusty poker out of his hand.

"Come, draw your chair by the fire, since you have made that nice blaze, and tell me all about it. I'll believe nothing against you, Darch, that I don't hear from yourself."

"I *will* tell you all about it," he said, as they sat down together, "and then you shall tell me if you'll stand by me still. I'll not hold you to your old word now—that would not be fair; you shall start afresh, if you do start, for it's no child's play we are about, my woman, and I'm on a road where there's no turning back: and if you're to be mine, you must shut your eyes and go along with me to the end."

"And what is the end to be?" she asked, timidly.

"If I succeed, it will be a new life for me, and a home for the woman who is true to me. I have a part to play, and a difficult one; but it must be carried through, and I believe it will set me clear in the world, with both pockets full of money. But these things are never done without risk, and I have run much of that already."

She pressed the hand that held hers, but could not refrain from a sigh. Her trust was still unshaken, though every word dispelled part of that illusion which, like the sunny haze on a rugged hill-top, had invested his memory with a soft and tender light, such as it never could again resume. The Darch Williams who had returned was no more the one that had gone away than she herself was the blooming girl he had left. Nothing about them was the same but their love, and that must make up for all the rest. She forgot the outer world, the hour, the place, the ill-omened secrecy, the work of the past day, and the coming morrow—everything, but the lost one found, and her resolution to stand by him against the world, till the world should do him justice. So she listened with eager ears, ready to believe all he asserted, to see things from his point of view, to sympathise with his troubles and cheer him with hopes for the future. But of the actual gulf that time had made between their two souls, as yet she perceived nothing.

Perhaps his vision was keener than hers, for he was very wary in what he told her, though the necessity of enlisting her services compelled him to reveal part of the truth. On one point he could satisfy her entirely. So far from having shared in the attack on old Mr. Oram, it was only by accident that he became acquainted with the

fact, long after it had happened. On the other hand, it was a severe blow to hear him acknowledge, rather as a piece of folly than as a crime, that he had fallen into Oram's power by borrowing privately from his stores, intending to repay the loan when he received the recompense of his labour—a job having been entrusted to him which nobody else could execute, and which was to be remunerated accordingly.

"But the fact was," he continued, bitterly, "I knew too much. Oram wanted to be rid of me, and if I had not had warning from one of my mates, I should have been done for; you would never have spoken to me again—and as to marrying, who would have taken a fellow after four or five years in prison? I knew it was all over with me here, so I ran for my liberty, if not for my life. And I thought at one time I should never venture back; but a chance has been given me, and I shall follow it up. I have got the promise of work, and mean to earn a good character—as Mr. Jones. Darch Williams must remain in his grave till he can hold up his head among his friends, and put his foot on the neck of his enemies. Hush! here comes old Betty—not a word of what I have been saying, to her or anyone, if you love me, Grace. I'm coming to open the door, Granny, directly," as the old woman shook it impatiently. Granny came bustling in, with a mixture of amusement and indignation.

"Locking my own door in my face, indeed! Pretty behaviour for a steady young woman like Grace Pyne: but there's no trusting one of ye. Well, my dear, and what do ye think of your passel?"

CHAPTER IX.

HOW GABRIEL MISSED HIS APPOINTMENT.

If anyone had warned Gabriel Bruce that he might, after all, be unable to keep his evening engagement, he would probably have replied that he had not conquered so many hindrances in the last five years to be beaten by them now. All the arguments of his two followers had not been sufficient to convince him that the nocturnal attempt was of a hostile character. Anybody might have toothache, and buy chloroform, and anybody might mistake a bedroom door; and as to the cap, no doubt there were plenty of them in London. So they could not persuade him, do what they might, to let Joel stay with him in town, while Martin went down into Devonshire. He did not enter into his reasons, but they were sounder than Martin himself would have admitted. The Iron-hand would be less likely to get into difficulties, with the ready Cornish wit on the alert to back him, than if he, inexperienced in English habits of business, were to do his reconnoitring alone: besides, in his secret soul Bruce admitted that they might be watched and followed, and would, at any rate, be safer

together. His authority, when used, was supreme ; and when they had settled him in lodgings, they had gone off by an afternoon train to Exeter, where they were to change for the North Devon line. For the present we must leave them to pursue their journey.

Gabriel had quitted Edith's presence almost abruptly, feeling that if he remained much longer without the power of speaking to her, except on ordinary matters, he might betray his impatience before the curious eyes of unconcerned spectators. Gladly would he have walked home alone; but an old acquaintance or two, departing at the same time, joined him in his walk, and amused themselves by cross-questioning him as to his past, present, and future. While they were pressing him as to the amount he made per diem at the gold diggings, he perceived that they were passing a Metropolitan station, and promptly availed himself of it as a door of escape.

"Can one get into the City this way?" he asked, stopping short.

"Into the City?" returned the companion whose arm he had just gently shaken off ; "no doubt, if you have an appointment with Gog and Magog, and will be had up by the Lord Mayor if you don't keep it. But, my dear fellow," in a tone of almost piteous expostulation—for this sudden flight of Bruce's would entirely undo the little plan he was privately forming of negotiating a temporary loan—"you never mean to go off in those unknown regions by yourself? You'll get into the wrong carriages—I always do—and there are half a dozen changes on these lines; and when you expect to arrive at the Monument, you'll be just quietly dropped at Primrose Hill."

"I'll chance it—all right!" said Gabriel, making his way to the carriages.

"I'll go and see David Forrest," thought he. "As near as I can recollect, his quarters used to be within a stone's throw of a first-rate carver and gilder, and I can have this picture framed at once. Blessings on that dear little artist, and on the pickpockets who threw her into my arms yesterday! It will go hard with me indeed if I do not find more ways than one of repaying her the good turn she did me. Halloa! I wonder if this is one of the half-dozen changes?"

The interesting nature of his private thoughts quite prevented his noticing how carefully he was followed—as he had been from the Carrolls' door—by a small, light figure, somewhat resembling a foreign sailor in appearance, the brown skin, gold earrings, and gay neckerchief being in keeping with the easy jacket and low-crowned hat. This man, who had a dark cloak thrown over one arm, seated himself in the same carriage in the City train without exciting the smallest suspicion. No other passenger got in, and Gabriel was too preoccupied to notice his companion, till the latter suddenly leaped up with a cry of horror.

"See there! see there! She will be killed!"

Bruce turned his face to the window—and in the same instant

received a swift blow on the back of the head, which laid him senseless on the floor of the carriage.

The man who had struck the blow, and whose whole bearing was at once changed, sprang upon him, knife in hand; with a couple of dexterous strokes he cut open his shirt collar and neckcloth, and drew out a steel chain which Bruce wore round his throat. To this was suspended a small case of the same metal, like a closely-woven purse, and the fingers of the stranger trembled with eagerness as they felt in every direction for spring or clasp, neither of which could they find. The chain was too short to be slipped over the head, and the secret of unfastening it was too well concealed to be discovered in haste and in that dim light. Gnashing his teeth with rage, the man tried to break it, but it defied his strength; he applied his knife to the links, but they were so artfully woven that he only blunted its edge: every moment thus lost might, he knew, bring detection: and maddened by disappointment, he would fain have smashed the network of the steel case, regardless how all this might affect the still unconscious victim. But nothing short of good tools would have enabled him to break it open, and a fearful imprecation on his bad luck escaped his lips, as he felt by the slackening speed that his opportunity was gone. As the train stopped, the door was pulled open; and a clergyman, rather below the ordinary height, but remarkably broad in the shoulders and chest, sprang hastily in, and as hastily recoiled. He had almost stumbled over Gabriel and his enemy.

"What is the matter? An accident?"

The plunderer bounded to his feet—his ready wit at once prompting his reply.

"A fit—the poor gentleman is in a fit—I have been doing what I could. Take him out, and I will run for a doctor:" and quick as lightning he had shot past the clergyman and was out of sight.

The alarm had, however, been given; some porters came running to help, and Gabriel Bruce was lifted out, and became the centre of an excited group, all asking questions at once, till the arrival of a superintendent restored something like order. He at once despatched one messenger for medical aid, and others to fetch a shutter, on which the injured man might be carried, asked a few sharp questions about the manner of his being discovered, and himself thoroughly examined the carriage.

"There is nothing there," he said, as he stepped out, with Gabriel's precious parcel in his hand. "I suppose this is his property. The train may go on—are you going by it, Mr. Forrest?"

The clergyman, who was supporting Bruce's head on his knee, looked up at the sound of his own name.

"Is that you, Stephenson? I am glad of it. No, I can't go on now; I must take care of this dear fellow. He was on his way to pay me a visit, I am sure. It was only this morning I heard of him

as being in perfect health, and just returned from Australia. Can this have been a fit, do you think?"

"We will ask the doctor that when he comes, sir," said the friendly superintendent, who had knelt down to examine the fallen man more closely; "but I can tell you one thing, it has been a very narrow shave. Here, Jack—run for a drop of brandy—quick, now! and bring that sacking over here, some of you: we'll sling him in that, and carry him to my room—that will be quieter than the waiting-room, and better than these cold stones."

The willing feet ran, and the willing arms wrought. Gabriel was soon lying on a heap of rugs by the superintendent's fire, and began to show signs of returning consciousness. A little brandy was poured down his throat and rubbed on his temples, and by the time the surgeon appeared he had opened his eyes and made an effort to speak, then subsided into stupor. The surgeon examined him carefully, administered what remedies were in his power, and then gave the superintendent a hint, which was speedily taken and acted upon. When the apartment had been cleared of all but their three selves and the passive patient, Mr. Harper spoke more plainly.

"This has been no fit, gentlemen."

"I thought not," said Stephenson.

"Who saw him first?" Mr Forrest told what he knew.

"That fellow you saw was not the one who fetched me?"

"Oh, no—that was one of my men," said the official.

"Has the other come back?"

"No; nor ever will of his own accord, I fancy."

"Well, it looks very ugly altogether. He has certainly had a blow on the back of his head, and the fellow has been trying to get at this"—holding up the chain. "Here are the marks of his instrument—the wonder is it did not go further; those gentry get very savage under disappointment."

"Do you suppose, Mr. Forrest, that your friend would carry valuable property about him in this way?" asked Stephenson.

Mr. Forrest thought it not improbable, as Mr. Bruce was said to be just arrived from the gold-fields; and it was equally possible that some one might have followed him under the impression that he carried gold-dust or bank-notes on his person.

"Should you know the man again?"

"Not to identify him; as far as I could see he was a dark, foreign-looking fellow, and his accent was not English, but I could swear to nothing more."

"Where does your friend live?"

"That I cannot tell you; there may be an address in his pocket."

Nothing, however, was found; and the surgeon suggested the hospital. But to this David Forrest would not agree.

"If you will help us, Harper—it is not the first job we have done together—I'll take him home with me. My house is quiet enough

just now, and my good woman is a capital hand at petting and cossetting sick people. I should not have time to-morrow to come to the hospital."

"To-morrow?" repeated the surgeon, in some surprise, but recollecting himself just in time. "Yes, yes, of course. Well, if you can accommodate him, all the better, for we have no beds to spare. The question is how to get him to your house at all."

This matter was arranged: and Gabriel awoke to consciousness at last in an uncurtained bed, so clean, tidy, and comfortable as to be positive luxury compared with many he had occupied in the last five years.

"What's the matter with me?" he asked the surgeon who sat by his side. "Railway collision?"

"Oh, no, my dear sir—you have only had a hard knock, and must keep quiet for the present. Do you know this gentleman?"

"Old Davie?" said Gabriel, feebly, with an effort to smile.

"Yes, too glad to have caught you, Bruce, my dear boy, and to keep you as long as I can. You are in my house, and my good Mrs. Honest is here to nurse you, and you will be all right in no time."

Gabriel smiled again, but faintly, and closed his eyes. The surgeon watched him with his finger on his pulse, and from time to time administered the medicine he had prepared, till he saw him fall asleep. Being himself much in request, he then took his leave, desiring that his instructions might be carefully attended to, and that the patient should be kept tranquil.

"I would not go away if I were really wanted, but I have been at work all day, and had no dinner. You may do without that luxury, Forrest, but I can't."

Perhaps Mrs. Honest overheard this last observation, for when her master returned to his friend's bedside she made no remark, only took her own measures, and beckoned him away imperatively.

"You'll please to remember, sir," she said, in a tone of suppressed resentment, "that when you went away this afternoon you said you was going to get a cup of tea with an old friend, which would do you good. May I make so bold as to ask if you had it?"

"Not that I am aware of, as I never got beyond the station."

"Very good, sir. Well, now, I put it to you, if you think it isn't flying in the face of Providence to throw your strength away just for nothing at all. The poor dear gentleman is asleep, and I'll take care he is not neglected, if you'll just be good enough to sit down in your arm-chair in the parlour, where your eggs and bacon are keeping hot, and take your tea like a Christian."

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Honest, curtsying, and retreating with the cover in her hand, as David Forrest obeyed her commands. To make assurance doubly sure, she ran downstairs and bolted every door, so that no visitor or applicant of any kind could get in without her knowledge. So thoroughly was it taken for granted that St. Edmund's

Parsonage was a refuge always open to everybody who wanted anything, that this was the only chance often of securing to her master refreshment.

"If they'd fix their own hour, and keep to it, no matter what o'clock it might be, one would know what one was about; but the only thing they all agree about is in coming just at the moment he is putting a morsel into his mouth: and he ain't a man, like some, as can live upon air and a biling of peas. Now, Sally, my maid," to a little girl of ten years old, who was learning the rudiments of service in her kitchen, "you listen for the bell, and when it rings you just look up the airy, and say I'll be down directly; they're not to ring again; and then creep up to the bedroom door and tap very gently —there's a good child. You quite understand, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, mum," said Sally, with suspicious alacrity, and the good woman returned to her patient.

Now Sally, who had come from a home of mismanagement and semi-starvation to feed on the best of the clerical larder, had found the love of good things increase with the knowledge of them; and her home training having turned on the principle, "Every one for himself," the first thought in her small mind, after ascertaining that no one would be looking after her for the next ten minutes, was to turn the golden opportunity to account. A row of black-currant jam pots, on the top shelf of the kitchen cupboard, had long been the object of her desires; why not pile chair upon chair, climb to the topmost, and so get one's hand among the treasures on the shelf? One out of so many would not be missed directly; and Sally made the attempt, with a courage and cleverness worthy of a better cause and a happier result. She contrived to secure a pot of jam; and then, as might have been expected, either missed her footing or lost her balance, tumbling down with a crash of chairs and crockery, and a roar of fright and pain that rang through the house—woke Gabriel out of his sleep, and David Forrest out of a waking dream, in which he had seldom time to indulge. He was down in the kitchen in no time, and Mrs. Honest found him comforting the child.

"Don't scold us, Mrs. Honest. Come, Sally, stop crying."

"What in the world induced you to touch that shelf at all?" asked Mrs. Honest.

"Pleas'm, I thought the jam was for the sick, and the poor gentleman would like some," said Sally, with amazing composure.

David looked at Mrs. Honest, and she at him—never were looks more full of meaning. Hers asked, "What shall I do to her?" His replied, "You should not have asked the question. Wait."

He left the kitchen without interfering further, but the good woman took the hint, and told Sally if she really wished to be useful she had better begin tidying up—see what a litter she had made! and no one could touch the jam now, all mixed with broken bits of earthenware—a plate or two having suffered as well as the pot. "Don't fancy you

impose upon me, child, for you don't. I shall keep my cupboard locked in future, till you are more trusty."

Following her master up stairs, she asked him respectfully if he were going to the meeting that evening.

"I must go for a short time; I'll be back as soon as I can."

"No hurry, sir; only if you'd be so kind as to let one of the girls come round and help me: Lucy Pyne, or her sister Grace."

Five minutes, and the housekeeper returned with a pale face of alarm to beg her master would come and see Mr. Bruce.

"I heard him talking as I came up the stairs, sir, and it don't sound right to me. It's my belief he's a little light-headed. I wish Mr. Harper would come back."

David wished the same when he saw the condition of his patient, who had half raised himself in his bed, and was gesticulating with one extended arm, as if arguing with an invisible adversary.

"Not time? I tell you there is time, and a little to spare. Have you deluded yourself into the belief that there is no accumulative power in resolutions made again and again as often as they are defeated, when the defeat is no fault of theirs, and the object is as holy as mine? I tell you, Wily Wilkins, that I know your purpose; and that you think by dint of hunting us down incessantly to tire us out. You never will; if fifty of you stood between her and me, down you would go, though I fell in cutting my way through."

And there was a suggestive swing of the right arm that looked very like sword exercise, but which David arrested with a firm though gentle hand.

"Bruce, old fellow, you are dreaming; lie down again, and I'll take care you are all right," he said, soothingly, as he drew the coverings again over the restless shoulder. His touch and his voice were not without a salutary influence, but seemed to awake another association of ideas, for he began in a very different key.

"That was one of your bright ideas, Martin, about the blankets. If we had unstrapped them in that storm, they would have been soaked—ah, that is comfortable. Leave a corner for poor Zack. He'll sleep the sounder for being close to my revolver. It is wonderful how clever fellows outwit themselves, and how they could think it possible to succeed in such schemes, and escape such dangers, with that poor thing's cause always crying out against them!"

They applied cool lotions to his head, and administered the medicine left on purpose, but the effect was at first but slight. He talked again—incoherently for some time, then with a rapid, fluent utterance, sometimes dropping into a plaintive key

"An appointment: what does it mean? Why this—that a certain thing, seeming impossible, must be done in a given time. Seeming impossible—just as a crevasse seems impossible to get over, when at every attempt you go right through the snow, and every rope you hold by begins to break, and all nature and all humanity seem in a league

to keep you back, or pull you down. It means, in my case, year after year of loss, and hard work, and danger, and nothing to look for in event of failure, but just working on till one dropped, and yet feeling that one could not, would not, fail, with light burning on before—could not fail, because man is never forsaken while he can believe—God only knows what a struggle it is sometimes. Five years—and no engagement, mind you; not a word with her first—her father took care of that. When he granted the term he made the conditions—no communication with her till they were over; so what she has thought of me all the while, and how many obstacles have been growing up between us at home, while I'm breaking my heart in cutting through them out here, who knows? I don't—God does, who pities us all.

"Put your poor foolish head down close by me, Zack—they shan't touch you. I wish every gentleman present to understand that our revolvers are loaded, and will be at the service of anybody who lays a finger on this poor fellow. He is under my care, and we'll take him back to old England, and bring him to Edith; and if her smile cannot give him reason, it will make his madness sweet. Is it not enough to make a wise man mad, let alone a poor sold-out soldier, to be up to his throat here in clay and dirt, shovelling and picking day after day, and finding nothing—with home and hope in the distance, which will be lost if he does not find?"

His voice, which had changed several times during this outburst, dropped mournfully at its close, he lay back exhausted, and at last slept.

"I cannot think why Clare is so late," said Helen Ford.

She was standing near the entrance to her own pretty drawing-rooms, where a large party had already assembled to hear some choice music. Her parties were always popular; their literary acquaintance was large, and they generally had the advantage of early intelligence in all musical and artistic news. On this particular night the programme, besides a selection of first-rate passages, comprised, by way of interlude, a brilliant piece, vocal and instrumental, by an Italian possessed of considerable histrionic as well as musical powers; and Mrs. Hartley Carrol had been intensely anxious to be present. On her account Miss Ford had already delayed the performance as late as she could venture to do; and just as the Signor was commencing his prelude, Sir Jesse Strahan, approaching his hostess, asked if she did not expect the party from Greville Gardens.

"Depend upon it," said Burlington Ford, "they had to wait dinner for Bruce. Here is Mitchell can tell you he saw him start for the City after leaving Carroll's, going underground all by himself. Mitchell has several bets already depending on Bruce's getting safely to his journey's end.

"Who *is* your friend Mr. Bruce, of whom everybody is talking to-

day?" asked Sir Jesse. He could put the question the more freely, that the rest of the company had left them standing alone.

Helen Ford seemed to find a little difficulty in answering. "He took us all by surprise a few years ago," she said, "by selling out of the army, and going off to Australia. Before that time he had been very popular with us all—everybody liked him, and he was one of those rare exceptions who never seemed to get into debt; therefore his sudden flight was the more unexpected. Report said that it was in a fit of despair about my friend Clare, who was then unmarried: but how far that was true I cannot say."

"I understood his object was to make a fortune."

"It is very likely that there may have been a mixture of reasons. He ought to have been well off in the world; but his mother's fortune was lost, or very nearly so, through the mismanagement of her trustee. He speculated with it, I believe, and the speculation proved a failure, and she was the sufferer. She was a Miss Wyatt; my mother knew her well, and remembered the whole case, and how hard it was. But I am not sure of the particulars."

Burlington looked at his sister, and she felt his foot giving hers a monitory pressure. Sir Jesse was rubbing his glasses, a slight quiver in his upper lip and one eyelid being the only tokens of an inward agitation which he was forcibly keeping down.

The ringing cadences of the singer's voice, the whirl of notes that were at once representing chariot wheels, *confetti*, and chorus, mingled with the laughter and applause of the audience, covered his momentory silence, and gave him time to think.

"What a pity Clare has missed it—something must have happened!" repeated Helen Ford.

"Something happened!—you alarm me. Of what nature?"

"Who can say? Do you believe in those instinctive warnings one reads about now so much—warnings that something has happened, which help to prepare you for the news on the road?"

"I am no believer in anything of the kind, Miss Ford. But stranger things might occur than an accident to one unaccustomed to London, especially if he had much money about him."

"Like Grimaldi's brother," said Burlington Ford. "But Bruce is not the kind of fellow to be easily disposed of. I should be more inclined to think Mrs. Carroll was not well—she looked fagged."

"I wish we knew! Burlington, couldn't you send for a hansom, and go round? You would be back again before supper."

"I have not the slightest objection, if I may smoke."

"No, no, that you must not do on any account."

"Then I can't help you. Ask Sir Jesse to go."

It was said in jest: but Sir Jesse bowed, and expressed his readiness so promptly that Helen was hardly allowed time for apologies. She watched him down the stairs, and then turned to her brother.

"Burlington, what made you give me that hint of warning?"

"A sense of impending danger. What made you talk of that of which you knew nothing?"

"Do you mean the story of Miss Wyatt's fortune? It did not concern him, surely?"

"Only so far as this—that rascally trustee, who spent her money and absconded, was Strahan's own brother-in-law."

"Oh!" said Helen Ford. "But *he* was not implicated?"

"Oh, no—much too clever; he disowned the connection, of course, and it is not everybody who knows it. Only, when one does know it, it is as well not to talk of it in his presence."

Sir Jesse's brougham had been ordered to wait, and he was speedily on his way to Greville Gardens. Knowles opened the door for him with an eagerness that showed the house was on the alert, and Hartley called from the staircase. "Is that you, Bruce?"

Sir Jesse drew a long breath. Bruce had not been there then. He hurried up to the drawing-room, where all eyes turned on him.

"I am come from the Fords," he explained. "Miss Ford was growing anxious, as she fully expected Mrs. Carroll, and, I believe, all your party, including Mr. Bruce. Has he not been here this evening?"

"No," said Hartley. "We waited dinner as long as we could, and have been waiting ever since. I don't like it, I own, and I have half a mind to go and look him up at his lodging."

"What makes you uneasy on his account?"

"First, because he was so anxious to come and pay Miss Kerr her money; and secondly, because Miss Kerr heard from his own lips that he has an enemy, who has followed him across the water, and seems to be dogging him wherever he goes. I am not easy."

"If you like to take my brougham, it is at your service," said Sir Jesse, who saw an opportunity of being with Edith that was not to be thrown away. Turning involuntarily towards her, as he made the offer, he saw at once that he had done her a service, for her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were full of gratitude.

Everybody thanked him, and he sat down among them with an air of conscious merit, when the door-bell rang again.

Alice sprang up. "Oh, now, this time it *must* be Mr. Bruce!" Edith sat perfectly still, and Tiny moved quickly to the door.

They heard a voice speaking to Hartley, and then the steps of two people coming upstairs. The new comer was David Forrest.

"News of Bruce at last," said Hartley, "but I am sorry to say they are bad. He was found senseless in a railway carriage—attacked by some ruffian——"

Alice uttered a shriek. "His enemy! I thought so. Oh, where is he? Do let us go to him!"

"Edith, my dear—oh, Hartley, help her—she is fainting," cried Tiny, springing towards her sister. And Edith, in making an effort to rise, fell heavily on the floor.

(To be continued.)

HELEN WHITNEY'S WEDDING.

"WHAT a hot day it is going to be!" cried the Squire, flinging back his thin light coat, and catching the corner of the breakfast-cloth with it, so that he upset the salt-cellar. "Yesterday was about the hottest *I* ever felt, but to-day will be worse."

"And all the jam-making about!" added Mrs. Todhetley.

"You need not go near the jam-making."

"I must to-day. Last year Molly made a mistake in the quantity of sugar: and never could be got to acknowledge it."

"Molly—there's the letter-man," broke off the Squire. "Run, lad."

I went through the open glass doors with speed. Letters were not every-day events with us. In these fast and busy days a hundred letters are written where one used to be. It was one only that the man handed me now.

"That's all this morning, Mr. Johnny."

I put it beside the Squire's plate, telling him it was from Sir John Whitney. There was no mistaking Sir John's handwriting: the popular belief was that he used a skewer.

"From Whitney, is it," cried he. "Where are my speatacles? What's the postmark? Malvern? Oh, then, they are there yet."

"Belle Vue Hotel, Malvern.

"DEAR TODHETLEY,—Do take compassion upon a weary man and come over for a day or two. A whole blessed week this day have I been here with never a friend to speak to, or to make up a rubber in the evening. Featherston's a bad player, as you know, but I wish I had him here now. I and my wife might take double dummy, for all the players we can get. Helen is engaged to be married to Captain Foliott, Lord Riverside's nephew; and nobody has any time to think of me and my whist-table. Bring the boys with you: Bill is as moped as I am. We are at the Belle Vue, you see. The girls wanted to stand out for the Foley Arms: it's bigger and grander: but I like a place that I have been used to.

"From your old friend,

"JOHN WHITNEY."

The little Whitneys had caught scarlatina, all the fry of them. Recovered now, they had been sent to a cottage on the estate for change; and Sir John, his wife, Bill, Helen, and Anna went for a week to Malvern while the Hall was cleaned. This news, though, of Helen's engagement, took us by surprise.

"How very sudden!" cried the Mater.

Tod was leaning back in his chair, laughing. "I *told* her I knew there was something up between her and that Captain Foliott."

"Has she known him before?" asked the Mater.

"Known him, yes," cried Tod. "She saw a good deal of him at Cheltenham. As if she would engage herself to anybody after only a week's acquaintanceship!"

"As if Sir John would let her!" put in the Squire. "I can't answer for what Miss Helen would do." And Tod laughed again.

When the children were taken ill, Helen and Anna, though they had had the complaint, were packed off to Sir John's sister, Miss Whitney, who lived at Cheltenham, and stayed there for some weeks. After that, they came to us at Dyke Manor for three days, and then went with their father and mother to Malvern. Helen was full of Captain Foliott, talking of him to us in private from morning till night. She had met him at Cheltenham, and he had paid her no end of attention. Now, as it appeared, he had followed her to Malvern, and asked for her of Sir John.

"It seems to be a good match—a nephew of Lord Riverside's," observed the Squire. "Is he rich, I wonder?—and is the girl over head and ears in love with him?"

"Rich he may be: but in love with him she certainly is not," cried Tod. "She was too ready to talk of him for that."

The remark was amusing, coming from Tod. How had he learnt to be so worldly wise?

"Shall you go to Malvern, father?"

"*Shall I go!*" repeated the Squire, astonished at the superfluous question. "Yes. And start as soon as ever I have finished my breakfast and changed my coat. You two may go also, as you are invited."

We reached Malvern in the afternoon. Sir John and Lady Whitney were alone, in one of the pleasant sitting-rooms of the Belle Vue Hotel, and welcomed us with outstretched hands.

"The girls and William?" cried Sir John, in answer to inquiries. "Oh, they are out somewhere—with Foliott, I conclude; for I'm sure he sticks to Helen like her shadow. Congratulate me, you say? Well, I don't know, Todhetley. It's the fashion, of course, to do it; but I'm not sure but we should rather be condoled with. No sooner do our girls grow up and become companionable, and learn not to revoke at whist, when they can be tempted into taking a hand, than they want to leave us. Henceforth they must belong to others, not to us; and we, perhaps, see them no more frequently than we see any other stranger. It's one of the crosses of life."

Sir John blew his old red nose, so like the Squire's, and my lady rubbed her eyes. Both felt keenly the prospect of parting with Helen.

"But you like him, don't you?" asked the Squire.

"As to liking him," cried Sir John, "I am not in love with him:

I leave that to Helen. We don't all see with our children's eyes. He is well enough, I suppose, as Helen thinks so. But the fellow does not care for whist."

"I think we play too slow a game for him," put in Lady Whitney. "He chanced to say one evening that Lord Riverside is one of the first hands at it; and I expect Captain Foliott has been in the habit of playing with him."

"Any way, you are satisfied with the match, as a match?" observed the Squire.

"I don't say but what I am," said Sir John. "It might be better, of course; and at present their means will not be large. Foliott offers to settle an estate of his, worth about ten thousand pounds, upon Helen; and his allowance from his Uncle Foliott is twelve hundred a year. They will have to get along on that at present."

"And the Captain proposes," added Lady Whitney, "that the three thousand pounds, which will come to Helen when she marries, shall be invested in a house: and we think it would be wise to do it. But he feels quite certain that Mr. Foliott will increase his allowance when he marries; probably double it."

"It's not Lord Riverside, then, who allows him the income?"

"Bless you, Todhetley, no!" spoke Sir John in a hurry. "He says Riverside's as poor as a church mouse, and vegetates from year's end to year's end at his place in Scotland. It is Foliott the mine-owner down in the North. Stay! which is it, Betsey?—mine-owner, or mill-owner?"

"Mill-owner, I think," said Lady Whitney. "He is wonderfully rich, whichever it is; and Captain Foliott will come into at least a hundred thousand pounds at his death."

Listening to all this as I stood on the balcony, looking at the grand and beautiful panorama stretched out below, for they were talking at the open window, I dreamily thought what a good thing Helen was going to make of it. Later on, all this was confirmed, and we learnt a few additional particulars.

Mr. Foliott, mill-owner and millionaire, was a very great man in the North; employing thousands of hands. He was a good man, too, full of benevolence, always doing something or other to benefit his townspeople and his dependents. But his health had been failing of late, and he had now gone over to the Cape, the sea-voyage having been advised by his doctors. He had never married, and Captain Folliott was his favourite nephew.

"It's not so bad, after all, is it, Johnny?"

The words were whispered over my shoulder, and I started back to see the radiant face of Helen. She and Anna had come in unheard by me, and had caught the thread of discourse in the room.

"I call it very good, Helen. I hope he is good too."

"You shall see," she answered. "He is coming up with William."

Her dark brown eyes were sparkling, the fresh healthy colour

shone on her cheeks. Miss Helen Whitney was satisfied with her bridegroom-to-be, and no mistake. She had forgotten all about her incipient liking for poor Slingsby Temple.

"What regiment is Captain Foliott in, Helen?"

"Not in any. He has sold out."

"Sold out!"

"His mother and his uncle made him do it. The detachment was ordered to India, and they would not let him go; would not part with him; begged and prayed of him to sell out. Nothing ever vexed him so much in his life, he says; but what could he do? His mother has but him: and on Mr. Foliott he is dependent for riches."

"Entirely dependent?"

"For *riches*, I said, Johnny. He has himself but a small competence. Ten thousand pounds nearly comprises it. And that is to be settled on me."

A slight bustle in the room, and we both looked round. Bill Whitney was noisily greeting Tod. Some one else had followed Bill through the door.

A rather tall man with reddish hair and drooping reddish whiskers, bold handsome features, and a look I did not like in his eyes. Stepping over the window-sill from the balcony, they introduced me to him, Captain Richard Foliott.

"I have heard much of Johnny Ludlow," said he, holding out his hand with a cordial smile, "and I am glad to know him. I hope we shall soon be better acquainted."

I shook his hand and answered in kind. But I was not drawn to him; not a bit; rather repelled. The eyes were not nice: or the voice, either. It had not a true ring in it. Undeniably handsome he was, and I thought that the best that could be said.

"Look here: we are going for a stroll," said Sir John: "you young people can come, or not, as you please. But if you go up the hill, remember that we dine at six o'clock. Once you get scampering about up there, you forget the time."

He went out with the Squire. Lady Whitney had a letter to write and sat down to do it; the rest of us stood, some on the balcony, some in the room; Helen, Tod, and Captain Foliott apparently trying which could talk the fastest.

"Why do you look at me so earnestly?" suddenly demanded the latter.

And it was to me he spoke. I laughed, and apologised; saying that his face put me in mind of some other face I had seen, but I could not remember whose. Which was true. It was true also that I had been looking at him more fixedly than the strict rules of society might require: but I had not an idea that he saw me.

"I thought you might be wishing to take my portrait," said the Captain, turning away to whisper to Helen.

"More likely to take your *character*," jestingly struck in Bill,

with more zeal than discretion. "Johnny Ludlow sees through everybody; reads faces off like a book."

Captain Foliott wheeled sharply round at the words, and stood before me, his eyes gazing straight into mine.

"Can you read my face?" he asked. "What do you see there?"

"I see that you have been a soldier: your movements tell me that: right-about, face, quick, sharp," answered I, turning the matter off with a jest. Tod opportunely struck in.

"How *could* you quit the army?" he asked with emphasis. "I only wish I had the chance of joining it." But he knew that he had better not let the Squire hear him say so.

"It was a blow," acknowledged Foliott. "One does meet with raps in this world. But, you see, it was a case of—of the indulgence of my own gratification weighed in the scale against that of my mother: and I let my side go up. My uncle also came on with his arguments and his opposition, and altogether I found myself nowhere. I believe she and he are equally persuaded that nobody ever comes out of India alive."

"Who will take my letter to the post?" called out Lady Whitney. And the whole lot of us volunteered to do it, and went out together. We met Sir John and the Squire strolling about the village rubbing their red faces, and saying how intensely hot it was.

They left us to regale ourselves at the pastrycook's, and sauntered on towards the dark trees shading that deep descent on which the hotel windows look out. We found them sitting on one of the benches there.

"Well, Foliott!" cried Sir John. "You'd not have found it hotter than this in India."

"Not so hot, Sir John. But I like heat."

"How do you do?" struck in a big, portly gentleman, who was sitting on the same bench as the Squire and Sir John, and whose face was even redder than theirs. "Did not expect to meet you here."

Captain Foliott, who was the one addressed, wheeled round to the speaker in that sharp way of his, and was evidently taken by surprise. His manner was cold; never a smile sat on his face as he answered.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Crane! Are you quite well? Staying at Malvern?"

"For an hour or two. I am passing a few days at Worcester, and my friends there would not let me go on without first bringing me to see Malvern."

The stranger spoke like a gentleman and looked like one, looked like a man of substance also (though Foliott did draw down his lips that same evening and speak of him as "nobody"); and Sir John, in his old-fashioned cordiality, begged of Captain Foliott to introduce his friend. Captain Foliott did it with a not very ready grace. "Mr. Crane, Sir John Whitney; Mr. Todhetley."

"A beautiful place, this, sirs," cried he.

"Yes, only it's too hot to walk about it to-day," answered they. "Have you been up the hill?"

"No, I can't manage that: but my friends are gone up. Have you heard lately from your uncle, Captain Foliott?"

"Not very lately."

"I hear the outward voyage did him a world of good."

"I believe it did."

As if the questions, of the stranger worried him, Captain Foliott strolled away towards the abbey: the two girls, Tod, and William following him. I stayed where I was: not liking the heat much more than the Squire did.

"You know Mr. Foliott of Milltown?" observed Sir John to the stranger.

"I know him very well indeed, sir. I am a mill-owner myself in the same place: but not as large a one as he is."

"He is uncommonly rich, we hear."

"Aye, he is. Could buy up pretty well half the world."

"And a good man into the bargain?"

"Downright good. Honest, upright, liberal; a true Christian. He does an immense deal for his fellow-men. Nobody ever asks him to put his hand in his pocket in vain."

"When is he expected home?"

"I am not sure when. That will depend, I expect, upon how he feels. But we hear the outward voyage has quite set him up."

"Captain Foliott often talks of his uncle. He seems to think there's nobody like him."

"He has cause to think it. Yes, I assure you, sirs, few men in this world can come up to George Foliott, the mill-owner, for probity and goodness."

How much more he might have said in Mr. Foliott's praise was cut short by the hasty appearance of two young men; evidently the friends of Mr. Crane. They laughed at the speed they had made down the hill, told him the carriage was ready, and that they ought to start at once to reach Worcester by the dinner hour. So the portly old gentleman wished us good day, and departed. Running up the bank, I saw them drive off from the Crown in a handsome two-horse phæton.

It was on the day following this that matters were finally settled with regard to Helen's marriage. Captain Foliott made good his wish—which, as it appeared, he had been harping upon ever since the proposal was first made: namely, that they should be married immediately, and not wait for the return of Mr. Foliott to England. Sir John had held out against it, asking where the hurry was; to this Captain Foliott had rejoined by inquiring what they had to wait for, and where was the need of waiting, and that the chances were that his uncle would stay away for a year. So at last Sir John, who was a

simple-minded man, and as easily persuaded as a duck is to water gave in; and the wedding was fixed to take place the next month September, at Whitney.

We made the most of this, our one entire day at Malvern, for we should disperse the next. The Whitneys to Whitney Hall, the house being now in apple-pie order for them; ourselves back to Dyke Manor; Captain Foliott to get the marriage settlement prepared. Helen's sum of three thousand pounds, all she would have at present, was not to be settled at all, but invested in some snug little house that they would fix upon together after the marriage, so that Captain Foliott's lawyers took the preparation of the deeds of settlement on themselves, saving trouble to Sir John. Three parts of the day we spent roaming the hill: and I must say Foliott made himself as delightful as sun in harvest, and I told myself that I must have misjudged his eyes in thinking they were not nice ones.

But the next morning we got a shock. How swimmingly the world would get on without such things, I leave those who have experienced them to judge. It came when we were at the breakfast-table, in the shape of a letter to LadyWhitney. The scarlatina—which was supposed to have been cleaned and scrubbed out—had come into the Hall again, the kitchen-maid being laid up with it.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! Whether Sir John or my Lady looked the most helplessly bewildered, might have puzzled a conjuror to decide. Back to the Hall they could not go, and what was to be done? The Squire, open-handed and open-hearted, pressed them to accompany us and take up their quarters at Dyke Manor; and for a minute or two I thought they would have done it; but somebody, Helen, I think, suggested a furnished house in London, and that was finally decided upon. So to London they would go, hire the first suitable house that offered, and the marriage would take place there instead of at home. Captain Foliott, coming in after breakfast from his hotel, the Foley Arms, stared at the change of programme.

"I'd not go to London," said he, emphatically. "London, at this season of the year, is the most wretched wilderness on the face of the whole earth. Not a soul's in it."

"The more room for us, Foliott," cried Sir John. "What will it signify to us whether the town is empty or full?"

"I would strongly advise you, Sir John, not to go. Lady Whitney will not like it, I am certain. As Mr. Todhetley has been good enough to offer you his hospitality ——"

"But, bless my heart," interrupted Sir John in a heat, "you don't suppose, do you, that I could trespass upon an old friend for weeks and weeks—a regular army of us? Were it a matter of a few days, I'd not say nay; but who is to foresee how long it may be before we can get in to our own house? You've not a bit of thought, Foliott."

"Why not go to your sister's at Cheltenham, sir?" was all the Captain said to this.

"Because I don't choose to go to my sister's at Cheltenham," retorted Sir John, who could be as obstinate as the Squire when he liked. "And why should we go to Cheltenham more than to London? Come!"

"I thought it would be less trouble for you, sir. Cheltenham is close at hand."

"And London is not so far off. As to its being empty, I say that's so much the better: we shall more readily find a furnished house in it. To London we go to-day."

There was no more to be said. And the notion became quite agreeable, now that they were growing reconciled to it.

"All things are directed for the best," concluded Lady Whitney in her simple faith. "I hardly see how we should have procured Helen's clothes down at Whitney: there will be no difficulty in London."

"You are right, my dear lady, and I am wrong," conceded Captain Foliott, with a good-natured smile. "To us young men of fashion," he added, the smile deepening to a laugh, "London between August and April is looked upon as a nightmare. But circumstances alter cases; and I see that it will be the best and most convenient place for you."

Drawing Helen aside as he spoke, and taking a small morocco case from his pocket, he slipped upon her finger his first and parting gift: a magnificent hoop of diamonds.

"I should like you to wear it always, my love," he whispered. "As the pledge of your engagement now; later, as the guard of your wedding-ring."

"I shall go in the smoking-carriage, Johnny."

"Shall you! You'll smell finely of smoke when we get there."

"Not I. I'll give my coat a shake at the journey's end. By Jove! I shall get left behind, if I don't take care."

He was right. The train was already on the move. Tod dashed into the smoking compartment; the porter closed the doors, and we were off.

Off to London. He and I were going up to Helen Whitney's wedding, to which we had been invited at Malvern. The Squire declined for himself, though Sir John had wanted him also. This was Monday; the wedding was to be on Thursday: and on the Saturday Anna and William were to go back with us to Dyke Manor.

It was September weather, and a glorious day. Now, as the train steamed away on its windings and turnings, the Malvern Hills would glide into view; and now be lost again. But the beautiful landscape was always to be seen, with its woods and dales and fertile plains; and there was not a cloud in the deep blue sky to obscure the sun.

I had the carriage to myself; and pictured Tod one of a crowd of smokers. At Oxford he came back to the carriage, and got in.

"Had enough smoke, Tod?"

"Just for now, lad," he shortly answered; and began to whistle and pull at his whiskers. By which I knew he had something on his mind.

"I say, Johnny, I am in a dilemma," he burst out when we were going on again, bending towards me from the opposite seat till his face nearly touched mine.

"What about? What is it?"

"Look here. When I got into the smoking-carriage it was full, all but one seat, which I took—and that was a corner one, which they had been polite enough to leave. The carriage was dark with smoke: pipes had been going, I expect, all the way from Worcester. I lighted mine, saying nothing, and nobody said anything to me. The man opposite to me and the one next me had a hot discussion on hand, touching a racehorse; not quarrelling, but talking loud, so that they made a tolerable noise. At the other end of the carriage sat two men facing one another, just as you and I sit now; and one of them I'll vow was an Oxford man: I could tell him by his cut. They were talking together also, but rather in an undertone. All at once, when we were nearing Oxford, there was a lull at my end, and I heard a bit of what they were saying. The first word that particularly caught my ear was Foliott. 'What plant is Foliott up to now, I wonder?' cried one. 'Don't know,' said the other; 'nothing good, we may be sure of. A rumour reached me that he was going to be married.' 'What a chance for the girl!' cried the first. 'Poor thing! But it may not be true,' he went on, knocking the ashes out of his pipe: 'who would marry such a scamp as that?' Now, Johnny," broke off Tod, "the question is, were they speaking of this Foliott? This man that we are now on our way to see married to Helen?"

"Was that all you heard, Tod?"

"Every word. The train began to slacken speed then for the Oxford station, and the two men got up to reach their overcoats and hand-bags, for they got out there. I had half a mind to stop them and ask what Foliott they had been speaking of; but I did not much like to, and while I hesitated they disappeared. They might just have told me to mind my own business if I had spoken; so perhaps it comes to the same."

"Foliott is not an absolutely uncommon name, Tod. There may be plenty of Foliotts about."

"Just so, lad. But, on the other hand, it may be the one we know of, Richard Foliott. One point coincides—he is going to be married."

I sat back on the cushioned seat, revolvng probabilities and improbabilities, and thinking of many things. That instinctive dislike I had taken to Captain Foliott's eyes, or to himself, or to both, flashed over me with vivid force. The pretty scenery we were just then whirling past, and on which my eyes seemed to be fixed, might have been a sandy desert, for all I saw of it.

"The worst is, the dilemma it puts one in," continued Tod. "To speak of this to the Whitneys, or not to speak?—that's the question. If it should turn out to be another Foliott, they might never forgive me. *He* never would."

"But then—Helen's whole future may be at stake. It may be in peril."

Tod pulled at his whiskers again. I read the name of a station we were flashing past.

"I hate a doubt of this sort," cried Tod impatiently, "where one can't see how one's duty lies. It bothers the mind. I think I'll let it go, Johnny."

"But, if it should turn out that he is a scamp; and for the lack of a word you let him—let him make bones of Helen!"

"What could I say?" he asked irritably. "That I overheard two fellows, in the smoking compartment of a railway train, saying that one Foliott was a scamp. Sir John would naturally ask me what grounds I had for assuming that it was their Foliott. Well, I have no grounds. And how small I should look!"

"There are slight grounds, at any rate, Tod. The name is his, Foliott; and both are going to be married."

"All the same, I don't see that I can speak."

"Put it in this light, Tod," I said. "You don't speak; and they get married; and then something or other bad turns up about Foliott; and Sir John finds out that it was in your power to warn him in time, and you did not. What will he say then?"

"I'm sure I don't know," grunted Tod. "I wish I could see which side land lies."

All the rest of the way to London we continued to discuss it by fits and starts, and at last hit upon a good thought—to tell the whole to William Whitney. It was the best thing to do, so far as we could see. It might all end in smoke, or—it might not.

The Whitneys had found a furnished house in Gloucester Place, near Portman Square. The maid who had taken the sickness was soon well again, and the Hall was being regularly fumigated now, preparatory to their return. In Gloucester Place they were within half an hour's drive of Miss Deveen's, which fact had guided them to the locality. Indeed, it was but a walk for the younger of the legs.

Not until night did we get the chance of a private talk with William. Our bedrooms opened into one another; and after we went up for good, he sat down in our room.

"You won't be affronted, Bill, at something I am about to say?" struck in Tod, by way of prelude.

"Affronted!" cried Bill. "I! What on earth do you ask that stupid question for?"

"In coming up to-day, I heard a few words in the train," went on Tod. "Two fellows were talking, and they brought up a man's

name in a disparaging manner. It is a friend of yours, Bill; and Johnny and I had a precious good discussion, I can tell you, as to whether we should repeat it to you, or not."

"Was it my name?" asked Bill. "What could they have to say against me?"

"No, no; they'd have got an answer from me had it been yours. First of all, we thought to mention it to Sir John; but I did not like to, and that's the truth. So we just concluded to put it before you, as one of ourselves, and you can tell him if you like."

"All right," said Bill. "Go ahead."

Tod told him all, from the beginning to the end. Not that it was much to tell: but he brought in our own conversation; the delicacy we felt in speaking at all, and the arguments for and against. Bill was not in the least put out; rather wondered, I thought, that we should be.

"It can't be Dick Foliott, you know," said he. "There's not anything against him; impossible that there should be."

"I am glad you say so," cried Tod, relieved. "It was only for Helen's sake we gave a thought to it."

"The name was the same, you see—Foliott," I put in. "And that man is going to be married as well as this one."

"True," answered Bill, slowly. "Still I feel sure it is quite impossible that it can be Foliott. If—if you think I had better mention it, I will. I'll mention it to himself."

"I should," said I eagerly, for somehow my doubts of the man were growing larger. "Better be on the safe side. You don't know much about him, after all, Bill."

"Not know much about him! What do you mean, Johnny? We know enough. He is Riverside's nephew, a very respectable old Scotch peer, and he is Foliott the mill-owner's nephew; and I'm sure *he* is to be respected, if it's only for the money he has made. And Dick has a very fair income of his own, and settles ten thousand pounds upon Helen, and will come into a hundred thousand by-and-by, or more. What would you have?"

I could not say what I would have; but the uneasiness lay on my mind. Tod spoke.

"The men alluded to conduct, I expect, Bill; not to means. They spoke of that Foliott as an out-and out scamp, and called the girl he was going to marry Poor thing, in a piteous tone. You'd not like that to apply to Helen."

"By Jove, no. Better be on the safe side, as Johnny says. We'll say nothing to my father at present; but you and I, Tod, will quietly repeat to Foliott what you heard, and we'll put it to him, as man to man, to tell us in all honour whether the aspersing words could have related to himself. Of course the idea is altogether absurd; we will tell him that, and beg his pardon."

So that was resolved upon. And a great relief it was. To decide

upon a course of action, in any unpleasant difficulty, takes away half the discomfort.

Captain Foliott had come to London but once since they met at Malvern. His stay was short; three days; and during those days he was so busy that Gloucester Place only saw him in the evenings. He had a great deal to do down in the north against his marriage, arranging his property preparatory to settling it on Helen, and seeing to other business matters. But the zeal he lacked in personal attention, he made up by letter. Helen got one from him every morning as regularly as the post came in.

He was expected in town on the morrow, Tuesday: indeed, Helen had thought he might perhaps have come to-day. Twelve o'clock on Wednesday, at Gloucester Place, was the hour fixed for signing the deeds of settlement: and by twelve o'clock on the following day, all going well, he and Helen would be man and wife.

Amidst the letters waiting on the breakfast-table on Tuesday morning was one for Helen. Its red seal and the crest upon it told whence it came.

"Foliott always seals his letters to Helen," announced Bill for our information. "And what ill news has that one got inside it?" continued he to his sister. "You look as cross as two sticks, Nelly."

"Just mind your own business," said Helen.

"What time will Captain Foliott be here to-day, my dear?" questioned her mother.

"He'll not be here at all to-day," answered Helen, fractiously. "It's too bad. He says it is impossible for him to get away by an early train, perhaps won't reach London in time to see us to-night; but he will be here the first thing in the morning. His mother is worse, and he is anxious about her. People always get ill at the wrong time."

"Is Mrs. Foliott coming up to the wedding?"

"No," said Lady Whitney. "I of course invited her, and she accepted the invitation; but a week ago she wrote me word she was not well enough to come. And now, children, what shall we set about first? Oh, dear! there is such a vast deal to do and to think of to-day!"

But we had another arrival that day, if we had not Captain Foliott. That was Mary Seabright—who was to act as bridesmaid with Anna. Brides did not have a string of maids in those days, as some have in these. Leaving them to get through their multiplicity of work—which must be connected, Bill said, with bonnets and wedding-cake—we went up with Sir John in a boat to Richmond.

That evening we all dined at Miss Deveen's. It was to be one of the quietest of weddings; partly by Captain Foliott's express wish, chiefly because they were not at home at the Hall. Miss Deveen and Miss Cattledon were to be the only guests besides ourselves and Mary

Seabright, and a Major White who would go to the church with Foliott. Just twelve of us, all told.

"But where's the bridegroom?" asked Miss Deveen, when we reached her house.

"He can't get up until late to-night; perhaps not until to-morrow morning," pouted Helen.

The dinner-table was a downright merry one, and we did not seem to miss Captain Foliott. Afterwards, when Sir John had got his whist-table—with my lady, Miss Deveen, and the grey-haired curate, who had dropped in—we amused ourselves with music and games in the other room.

"What do you think of the bridegroom-to-be, Johnny Ludlow?" suddenly demanded Miss Cattledon, who had sat down by me. "I hear you saw him at Malvern."

"Think of him! Oh, he—he is a very fine man; good-looking, and that."

"That I have seen for myself," retorted Cattledon, pinching her hands round her thin waist. "When he was staying in London, two or three weeks ago, we spent an evening in Gloucester Place. Do you *like* him?"

She put the "like" so very pointedly, staring into my face at the time, that I was rather taken aback. I did *not* like Captain Foliott: but there was no particular necessity for telling her so.

"I like him—pretty well, Miss Cattledon."

"Well, I do not, Johnny Ludlow. I fancy he has a temper; I'm sure he is not good-natured; and I—I don't think he will make a very good husband."

"That will be a pity. Helen is fond of him."

Miss Cattledon coughed significantly. "Is she! Helen is fond of him in-so-far as that she is eager to be married—all girls are—and the match with Captain Foliott is an advantageous one. But if you think she cares for him in any other way, Johnny Ludlow, you are quite mistaken. Helen Whitney is no more in love with Captain Foliott than you are in love with me."

At which I laughed.

"Very few girls marry for love," she went on. "They fall in love, generally speaking, with the wrong person."

"Then what do they marry for?"

"For the sake of being married. With the fear of old maidism staring them in the face, they are ready, silly things, to snap at almost any offer they get. Go up to Helen Whitney now, tell her she is destined to live in single blessedness, and she would be fit to fret herself into a fever. Every girl would not be, mind you: but there are girls and girls."

Well, perhaps Miss Cattledon was not far wrong. I did not think as she did then, and laughed again in answer: but I have learned more of the world and its ways since.

In every corner of the house went Helen's eyes when we got back to Gloucester Place, but they could not see Captain Foliott. She had been hoping against hope.

Wednesday. Young women, bringing in huge band-boxes, were perpetually ringing at the door, and by and by we got treated to a sight of the finery. Enough gowns and bonnets to set up a shop were spread out in Helen's room. The wedding-dress lay on the bed: a glistening white silk, with a veil and wreath beside it. Near to it was the dress she would go away in to Dover, the first halting-stage on their trip to Paris: a quiet shot-silk, Lady Whitney called it, blue one way, pink another. Shot, or not shot, it was uncommonly pretty. Straw bonnets were the mode in those days, and Helen's, perched above her travelling-dress, had white ribbons on it and a white veil—which was the mode for brides also. I am sure Helen, in her vanity, thought more of the things than of the bride-groom.

But she thought of him also. Especially when the morning went on and did not bring him. Twelve o'clock struck, and Sir John Whitney's solicitor, Mr. Hill, who had come up on purpose, was punctual to his appointment. Sir John had thought it right that his own solicitor should be present at the reading and signing of the settlements, to see that they were drawn up properly.

So there they sat in the back parlour, which had been converted into a business room for the occasion, waiting for Captain Foliott and the deeds with what patience they had. At one o'clock, when they came in to luncheon, Sir John was looking a little blue; and he remarked that Captain Foliott, however busy he might have been, should have stretched a point to get off in time. Appointments, especially important ones, were appointments, and ought to be kept.

For it was conclusively thought that the delay was caused by the Captain's having been unable to get off the previous day, and that he was travelling up now.

So Mr. Hill waited, and Sir John waited, and the rest of us waited, Helen especially; and thus the afternoon passed in waiting. Helen was more fidgety than a hen with one chick: darting to the window each instant, peeping down the staircase at the sound of every ring.

Dinner-time; and no appearance of Captain Foliott. After dinner; and still the same. Mary Seabright, a merry girl, told Helen that her lover was like the knight in the old ballad—he loved and he rode away. There was a good deal of laughing, and somebody called for the song, "The Mistletoe Bough." Of course it was all in jest: as each minute passed, we expected the next would bring Captain Foliott.

Not until ten o'clock did Mr. Hill leave, with the understanding that he should return the next morning at the same hour. The servants were beginning to lay the breakfast-table in the dining-room, for a lot of sweet dishes had been brought in from the pastry-

cook's, and Lady Whitney thought they had better be put on the table at once. In the afternoon we had tied the cards together—"Mr. and Mrs. Richard Foliott"—with white satin ribbon, sealed them up in their envelopes with white wax, and directed them ready for the post on the morrow.

At twelve o'clock we went upstairs to bed; and until that hour had still been expecting Captain Foliott.

"I feel positive some dreadful accident has happened," whispered Helen to me as we said good night, her usual bright colour faded to paleness. "If I thought it was carelessness that is causing the delay, as they are cruelly saying, I—I should never forgive him."

"Wait a minute," said Bill to me, touching Tod also. "Let them go on."

"Are you not coming, William?"

"In two minutes, mother."

"I don't like this," began Bill, speaking to us both over the bed-candles, for the other lights were out. "I'll be hanged if I think he means to turn up at all!"

"But why should he not?"

"Who is to know? Why has he not turned up already? I can tell you that it seems to me uncommonly strange. Half a dozen times to-night I had a great mind to call my father out and tell him all about what you heard in the train, Tod. It is so extraordinary for a man, coming up to his wedding, not to appear: especially when he is bringing the settlements."

Neither of us spoke. What, indeed, could we say to so unpleasant a topic? Bill went on again.

"If he were a man in business, as his uncle old Folliott is, I could readily understand that interests connected with it might delay him, detain him till the last moment. But he is not; he has not an earthly thing to do."

"Perhaps his lawyers are in fault," cried Tod. "If they are backward with the deeds of settlement——"

"The deeds were ready a week ago. Foliott said so in writing to my father."

A silence ensued, rendering the street noises more audible. Suddenly there came a sound of a horse and cab dashing along, and it pulled up at our door. Foliott, of course.

Down we went, helter-skelter, out on the pavement. The servants, busy in the dining-room still, came running to the steps. A gentleman, getting out of the cab with a portmanteau, stared, first at us, then at the house.

"This is not right," said he to the driver, after looking about him. "It's next door but one."

"This is the number you told me, sir."

"Ah, yes. Made a mistake."

But so sure did it seem to us that this late and hurried traveller

must be, at least, some one connected with Captain Foliott, if not himself, that it was only when he and his luggage had disappeared within the house, and the door was shut, and the cab gone away, that we realised the disappointment, and the vague feeling of discomfort it left. The servants went in. We strolled to the opposite side of the street, unconsciously hoping that luck might bring another cab with the right man in it.

"Look there!" whispered Bill, pointing upwards.

The room over the drawing-room was Lady Whitney's; the room above that, the girls'. Leaning out at the window, gazing now up the street, now down it, was Helen, her eyes restless, her face pale and woe-begone in the bright moonlight.

It was a sad night for Helen Whitney. She did not attempt to undress, as we knew later, but kept her post at that weary window. Every cab or carriage that rattled into view was watched by her with eager, feverish anxiety. But not one halted at the house, not one contained Captain Foliott. Helen Whitney will never forget that unhappy night of tumultuous feeling and its intolerable suspense.

But here was the wedding-morning come, and no bridegroom. The confectioners were rushing in with more dishes, and the dress-makers to put the finishing touches to Helen. Lady Whitney was just off her head: doubtful whether to order all the paraphernalia away, or whether Captain Foliott might not come yet. In the midst of the confusion a little gentleman arrived at the house and asked for Sir John. Sir John and he had a long conference, shut in alone: and when they at length came out Sir John's nose was of a dark purple tipped with white. The visitor was George Foliott, the mill-owner: returned since some few days from the Cape.

And the tale he unfolded would have struck dismay to the nose of many a wiser man than was poor Sir John. The scamp spoken of in the train was Richard Foliott; and a nice scamp he turned out to be. Upon Mr. Foliott's return to Milltown the prospective wedding had come to his ears, with all the villainy encompassing it; he had at once taken means to prevent Mr. Richard's carrying it out, and had now come up to enlighten Sir John Whitney.

Richard Foliott had been a scamp at heart from his boyhood; but he had contrived to keep well before the world. Over and over again had Mr. Foliott paid his debts and set him on his legs again. Captain Foliott had told the Whitneys that he quitted the army by the wish of his friends: he quitted it because he dared not stay in it. Before Mr. Foliott departed for the Cape he had thrown Richard off; obliged to do it. His fond, doting, foolish mother had reduced herself to poverty, helping him. The estate, once worth ten thousand pounds, which he had made a pretence of settling upon Helen, belonged to his mother and was mortgaged about sixteen deep. He dared not go much abroad for fear of arrest, especially in London. This and a great deal more was disclosed by Mr. Foliott to Sir John; who sat

and gasped, and rubbed his face, and wished his old friend Todhetley was at hand, and thanked God for the escape of Helen.

"He will never be better," affirmed Mr. Foliott, "be you very sure of that. He is innately bad, and the pain he has inflicted upon me for years has made me old before my time. But—forgive me, Sir John, for saying so—I cannot think you exercised cautious discretion in accepting him so easily for your daughter."

"I had no suspicion, you see," returned poor Sir John. "How could I have any? Your nephew, and Lord Riverside's nephew——"

"Riverside's nephew he called himself, did he! The old man is ninety, as I daresay you know, and never stirs from his home in the extreme north of Scotland. Some twenty years ago, he fell in with the sister of Richard's mother (she was a governess in a family up there), and married her. That's how he comes to be Lord Riverside's 'nephew.' But they have never met in their lives."

"Oh, dear!" bemoaned Sir John. "What a villain!—and what a blessed escape! He made a great point of Helen's bit of money, three thousand pounds, not being tied up before the marriage. I suppose he wanted to get it into his own hands."

"Of course he did."

"And to pay his debts with it—as far as it would go."

"*Pay his debts with it!*" exclaimed Mr. Foliott. "Why, my good sir, it would take thirty thousand to pay them. He would just have squandered it away in Paris, at his gaming-tables, and what not; and then have asked you to keep him. Miss Whitney is well quit of him: and I'm thankful I came back in time to save her."

Fine news to tell to Helen! Deeply mortifying to have ordered a wedding-breakfast and wedding things in general when there was no wedding to be. The salt tears were running down Lady Whitney's homely cheeks, as Miss Deveen drove up.

Mr. Foliott asked to see Helen. All he said to her we never knew—but there's no doubt he was as kind as a father.

"He is a wicked, despicable man," sobbed Helen.

"He is all that, and more," assented Mr. Foliott. "You may be thankful your whole life long for having escaped him. And, my dear, if it will at all help you to bear the smart, I may tell you that you are not the first young lady by two or three he has served, or tried to serve, in precisely the same way. And to one of them he behaved more wickedly than I care to repeat to you!"

"But," ruefully answered poor Helen, softly sobbing, "I don't suppose it came so near with any of them as the very morning."

And that was the end of Helen Whitney's wedding.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

AMSTERDAM, the capital of Holland, lays claim to pretensions of its own, as it is the duty of the chief town of every respectable country to do. One hears of it as "a city built upon piles." But if the simple-minded traveller, by this description, expects to find the streets and houses of Amsterdam elevated upon numerous perpendicular columns, through which he may gaze as into the "long-drawn aisles" of a forest, or the ruined pillars of a classic temple, his anticipations will not be realised. We may at once state that the houses of Amsterdam do not bear any resemblance to a stilted mountebank. The houses, however, do as a fact rest upon piles, to a great extent, not only in Amsterdam but throughout Holland; and this will explain why so many of them have not fulfilled the hopes of their first architects, but have turned to crooked ways, and ceased to be upright before the world.

In Amsterdam, especially, very many of them have long bid farewell to the perpendicular style. Some lean forward alarmingly; others bend towards each other, as though a long and close companionship had ended in deep affection: again, others look as if a push would send them to a last and safer resting-place in the bed of a neighbouring canal. Some of the streets are so narrow that from a top front window you can very comfortably shake hands with an opposite neighbour: a juxtaposition, possibly, at times more convenient than agreeable. If a waggon or carriage comes rattling down the street at a startling pace, and accompanied by a noise as of many waters, the nervous and terrified pedestrian must rush into a friendly doorway, and take refuge until the danger has passed onwards.

In point of fact, Holland may be said to possess two capitals: one of fashion, the other of trade and commerce. The Hague represents the former, Amsterdam the latter. The aspect of each town corresponds with the ends to which it is destined. The one has a certain amount of stately repose and unruffled dignity due to the vicinity of royalty; the other is full of life and activity, and the more vulgar and hardening pursuits of money getting.

Amsterdam is the largest town in Holland, and is built in the shape of a crescent or horse-shoe. The visitor may discover this fact for himself by means of his guide-book; or from the summit of one of the towers; or in the course of a morning's perambulation through the town, when the information will certainly be volunteered by one or other of its intelligent inhabitants. It is situated at the influx of the Amstel into the Y, the latter being an arm of the Zuyder Zee, and forming the harbour. Hence the name Amsterdam—the dam of the Amstel. The locks are of enormous strength, to resist the inroads

of the sea; and the immense precautions taken are not without reason, for the streets of Amsterdam are much below sea level. The docks and quays are large and important, and capable of accommodating a thousand vessels.

Amsterdam was not always the place of importance it now is. In the twelfth century it consisted merely of a few fishermen's huts. About the year 1204 the dam was constructed which gives the name to the town. In the fourteenth century the town began to grow in importance, and in the sixteenth century it had risen to eminence. It has been fortunate enough to retain its prosperity up to the present day. In commercial importance, in wealth, in its amount of trade, it holds a prominent position in Europe. Its industries are numerous—sugar and camphor refineries, manufactories of tobacco and cobalt blue, large breweries, and diamond mills.

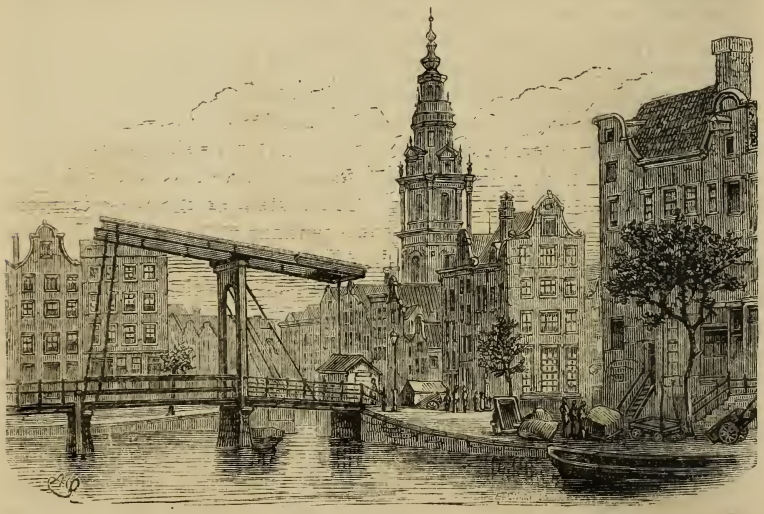
Amsterdam has its various quarters. Its fashionable and select quarter, which is naturally very exclusive and turns up its nose at anything in the shape of trade below a banker or a rich shipowner; its commercial quarter, its manufacturing quarter, its shipping quarter; its Jews' quarter, highly distinguished for its dirt and its fried fish; its busy quarter, and its idle quarter. The system of drainage is most defective, and canals intersect the town perhaps more completely than they do any other town in Holland. All the quarters just enumerated possess the one common feature of canals; and all the canals possess the one prevailing, abounding, and most unmistakable characteristic of bad smells. It would be utterly impossible to describe the smells of Amsterdam. Those of Cologne have passed into a proverb: those of Amsterdam ought to possess a history of their own. It is true we were there at an unfavourable time; at the end of a long, intensely hot summer, when the rains had set in; but anything more terrible than the reality could not be imagined. And yet they are considered healthy, for the Dutch doctors send patients here in order that they may inhale the odours.

Having passed a large proportion of my days on the Continent: where, go where you will, bad smells are seldom at a premium: I was able, with a tolerable grace, to submit to this nuisance, in which I almost seemed to recognise an old friend. A., on the other hand, whose experience had not permitted him to imagine anything more violent than a midsummer-day on the Thames, rebelled fiercely, and almost knocked under to the enemy. He found it stronger than his powers of endurance. On nearing a bridge he would rush over it as if pursued by the plague. Every night he made up his mind that he would leave the next day, and every morning the artistic attractions of the place proved too powerful for him, and his departure was postponed.

Certain portions of Amsterdam retain a greater air of antiquity than almost any other town in Holland. These portions are very picturesque. Tall, gabled, ancient houses; groups and clusters that

you come upon accidentally, and that make you feel, "This is Holland; this almost comes up to one's idea of what the place ought to be." And their tendency to diverge from the straight line, to lean backwards or forwards, to the right or the left, increases the effect. Particularly quaint and curious are some portions of the Jews' quarter: though as much distinguished for dirt as many other parts of the town are for cleanliness. The Jews in Amsterdam are a race of strength and multitude. They abound, and are not to be mistaken when seen.

Wandering out one evening we surveyed the town by the light of a brilliant moon. The scene was imposing. All the peculiar features of the architecture were thrown out; the quaint outlines, the



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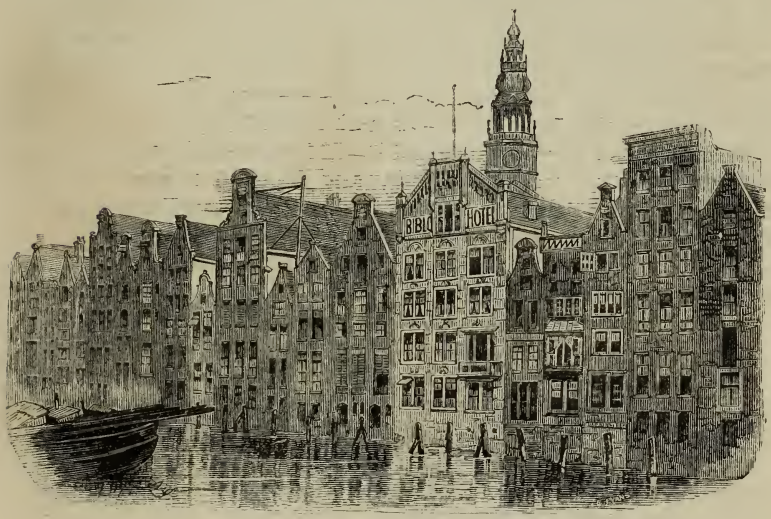
gabled roofs, the leaning tendency of many of the houses. The new paint, the modern window-sashes, white, yellow, and red, were subdued and concealed. Deep shadows were cast by the moonlight, and marked outlines, which all gave a weird and ghastly effect to the old town; a semi-ruined appearance especially picturesque.

Suddenly we came upon the quay—one of the most interesting parts of Amsterdam—and across the water the moon threw one of the brightest of silver tracks I had ever seen. It was as if Dutch fairies were holding high revelry, and had lighted up their palaces for the occasion. We had only to fancy strains of fairy music and myriads of fairy feet dancing beneath the waters in a mazy whirl, and the effect was complete. Forests of masts stood out in the moonlight; here a boat was gliding away like an uncanny object endowed with life, making for sea; there another was floating up to her moorings: a type of life if one cared to moralise; the constant incoming

and outgoing; the taking up and shuffling off this mortal coil; an empty place speedily filled up, and the outward-bound forgotten as soon as out of sight.

We crossed the water over the long bridge, and got right away from the hum and bustle of the town; away from people and houses into comparative desertion. A solitary railway station that seemed to have done its work for the night, for the officials were absent, and the lamps extinguished. Here all was dark and dismal, and it was difficult to feel certain that the next step would not land us in a bath more cold than comfortable. So, unable to pass the time here in a profitable contemplation of human nature, we retraced our steps into the town. In one of the streets a barrel organ was grinding a dance tune, and boys and girls, young men and women, were



Amsterdam, showing Back of the Bible Hotel, and Steeple of the Old Church.

taking the opportunity of giving themselves a gratuitous lesson in the graceful art. Really gracefully they tripped it. Every now and again a vehicle came rattling along and scattered the busy dancers into doorways, whence they issued as soon as the danger had passed, and took up the thread of their feet's discourse where they had laid it down.

Previously to going to Amsterdam we had been informed that its best hotel was the Old Bible; so named from the fact of the first Bible having been translated there into Dutch, or some such reason; and an old Bible is shown to visitors in the coffee-room. Accordingly we alighted at the hospitable doors of the Old Bible Hotel. The first thing that struck me on going up the staircase was a coloured window half-way up the landing, and bearing the inscription: Bible Hotel, 5th chap. I. Timothy, 23rd verse. We leave

the reader to turn to the reference for himself. It was, at any rate, not inapplicable to the window of an inn.

Not a word can be said against the hotel itself, or the comfort of the establishment. Everything was well done; the rooms were good; the table d'hôte was excellent and abundant, its only fault a want of variety; the host was civil and anxious to further the comforts of his guests. Still, though a good and comfortable hotel, we were misinformed as to its being the best in Amsterdam. And it possessed, to a light sleeper, a fatal drawback. It was situated in a narrow street, and the noise at night was overpowering and incessant until two o'clock in the morning.

To begin with, we were close to a church—the Old Church, built in the 14th century, and possessing three of the finest painted windows in all Europe—which rang out the time every quarter of an hour in loud discordant chimes; each quarter possessing its own tune; so that every tune came over twenty-four times in the corresponding number of hours; ninety-six airs in the evening and the morning that compose the day. The bells were cracked and dismal, and the jumble of sound was so great that it was impossible to make out the slightest melody. "That tune, sir," said the guide to me one morning, "is called 'Behold, he cometh!' a very beautiful air out of the Messiah; by a celebrated composer named Mr. Handel."

I was too polite to let him see that the latter part of the information was not altogether needed; and racked my memory for a solo or chorus in the oratorio that commenced with the imposing words "Behold, he cometh!" In vain. Day after day, hour after hour, the air haunted me almost to the verge of madness: until at length I discovered that there really was an attempt on the part of the distracting bells to give forth an imitation of "See, the Conquering Hero comes!" It has already been remarked that the Dutch are not a musical nation; they are very great in chimes, but their chimes are by no means great in themselves.

That same morning I was making inquiries about an English church in Amsterdam, of this same intelligent guide. "We had one, sir," said he, "but we have one no longer. The clergyman could not get enough customers, and he had to shut it up, and go back to England!"

But to return to the hotel, for we have not yet done with the noises.

To a wakeful sleeper these incessant chimes were in the highest degree exasperating. If a pillow thrown at the steeple could have stopped them, there would have been a long account to settle for bed furniture on leaving the premises. But what was still worse than the chimes was the noise in the streets at night. It was a very narrow street, as I have already remarked, paved with uneven stones, and echoing. A cab or omnibus coming down would rattle along with a sound like a whole charge of artillery. About eleven o'clock, tired with the day's work—sight-seeing and picture-gazing, as everyone knows, is

the hardest work imaginable—I would retire to my well-earned couch, to seek a well-merited repose. Alas, there is no peace in this world for the wicked. Precisely at that hour, the cafés would commence to send forth their freight of noisy drunken men and women, of the very lowest description conceivable, and until two o'clock in the morning it was useless to hope for sleep. These Bacchanalian worshippers would go marching up and down in bands of sixes and twelves, shouting and singing at the very tops of their voices; such voices as belong only to very coarse natures, or only the Dutch possess. Some people have the happy faculty of getting used to things; the Scotch are especially clever at "adapting themselves to circumstances." If they cannot get wine, they will drink water; if they cannot afford to idle, they will work. Unfortunately I cannot boast of this stoical nature. A noise that worries me one day will worry me more the next; and a month's accumulation of such horrors would go far towards landing me where the wicked cease from troubling. I can quite understand how poor Leech died from street organs. I should do the same under similar circumstances. The consequence was that the Bible Hotel was to me, from external, not internal causes, a veritable house of penance.

The intelligent reader will possibly wonder why I did not change my quarters from the front of the hotel to the back, where probably there would have been less noise. Less, certainly. But the back of the hotel overhung the canal, as the accompanying illustration will demonstrate, and I preferred the noise to the terrible odours rising "like an exhalation" from the waters. Of the two evils the former, bad as it was, was yet the minor.

There was still another nuisance, common no doubt to all the hotels in Amsterdam—mosquitoes. These were a perfect and positive plague They tormented me for a day or two, and then left me in peace; but A. fell a victim to them from the first day to the last. The faces and hands of all the visitors were covered with the bites of these venomous insects; large red spots that stung and irritated, and utterly took away what beauty the face might originally possess. It was an ordinary thing for the visitors to meet at the breakfast-table and compare notes; sympathise with whilst laughing at each other's ludicrous appearance. Night after night I was wont to perambulate my room, a candle in one hand, an instrument of vengeance in the other, and slaughter as many of the enemy as the most minute investigation could discover. A. would do likewise, but to him it seemed of little use, for the next morning, and morning after morning, he would appear a martyr to mosquitoes.

Most people stay in Amsterdam two days at most. We remained much longer, and made it our head-quarters whilst taking excursions in the neighbourhood. A. found so much artistic matter to his taste, so much occupation for his pencil, that I, whose sole object was amusement, took many of these excursions alone. By degrees, and in spite of the noises, I grew quite fond of my room. There

was an opposite neighbour whose daily work amused us a great deal. He was lodged on the third floor, and made glass bottles and tubes, and other curious articles. His fire would glow to a white heat, and he would bend over his work in a skull-cap, the glare reflecting itself vividly upon his prominent features until he almost looked like a wizard discovering secrets in alchemy or searching for the philosopher's stone.

We, too, seemed a puzzle and a mystery to the old sage. Evidently not there for business purposes—as the greater part of the travellers who alighted at the hotel with huge trunks and boxes of goods and merchandise—he yet wondered what kept us so long in a town whose resources of amusement might be exhausted in a period of forty-eight hours. Then I would disappear for two or three days, and he would no doubt fancy he had got rid of his opposite neighbour, who watched his work with persistent curiosity—and lo! on the third or fourth morning, to his evident astonishment, there would be a reappearance.

The people of the table d'hôte were a constant source of amusement, a veritable study of character. One man was the precise image of Lord Dundreary, even to the eyeglass, without which he appeared incapable of finding the way to his mouth. The English were many of them veritable curiosities. One party of tourists gave much amusement during the latter portion of our stay. They had come, as was easily discovered, from the North of England, and were going on to Germany. It was their habit all to talk at once, and in loud tones, and their capacity for rushing about was as great as it was inexhaustible. They would retire to bed at midnight, and rise again at six, rather than lose the smallest object of attraction; and at eight o'clock in the morning they might be seen tearing about the streets of Amsterdam, as if their very lives depended upon perpetual motion.

It has been frequently remarked, and it is a singular but certain fact, that the specimens of English people we encounter abroad are more often than not of a very unusual and uninteresting type. They are caricatures of our nation, and many a time we have to blush for their unparalleled want of taste in dress. Who and what many of them are, whence they come, and where they hide themselves when they return to their native shores, must for ever remain one of those mysteries that have baffled philosophers and driven sages to despair.

Amsterdam has long been famous for its diamond-cutting, and with anticipations of pleasure I started one morning on a visit of inspection to one of their largest mills. I was signally disappointed. The process is uninteresting, and indeed almost invisible. The small stone, unattractive in its natural state, is fixed into what appears to be a lump of clay; it is then held with instruments to a wheel turning with amazing speed; and the process of cutting and polishing is gradually accomplished. The whole thing is so simple that the works are scarcely worth a visit.

Another manufactory would possess far greater charms to some

people. If the Dutch are famous for their schiedam, they are equally so for their curaçoa: a much more delicious decoction: though if taken in large quantities, very detrimental to health. The most celebrated makers are Wynandt and Co., a house famous all over the world. Their place is a small, unpretending-looking street, where you may go and give an order for 1,000 dozen, and have it speedily executed, or you may invest a penny in a small glass of it: or of any other liqueur the world contains.

Curaçoa is of three kinds; red, white, and green. The latter is exquisite in colour, though suggestive of prussic acid and other deadly poisons. But, once tasted, you are bound to return to the charge. It has less fire than the red, and is less soft and fâde than the white. A. went in so strongly for curaçoa that I began to have doubts as to whether his bites were all to be laid to the charge of the mosquitoes; and it was not until I had limited the supply to something less than a gallon a day that I was satisfied the wicked insects had not been unduly abused.

We were not very long in discovering that tea and not coffee was the pleasanter and more universal beverage in Holland. And yet their process of making tea is a very ceremonious one, and not the best in the world.

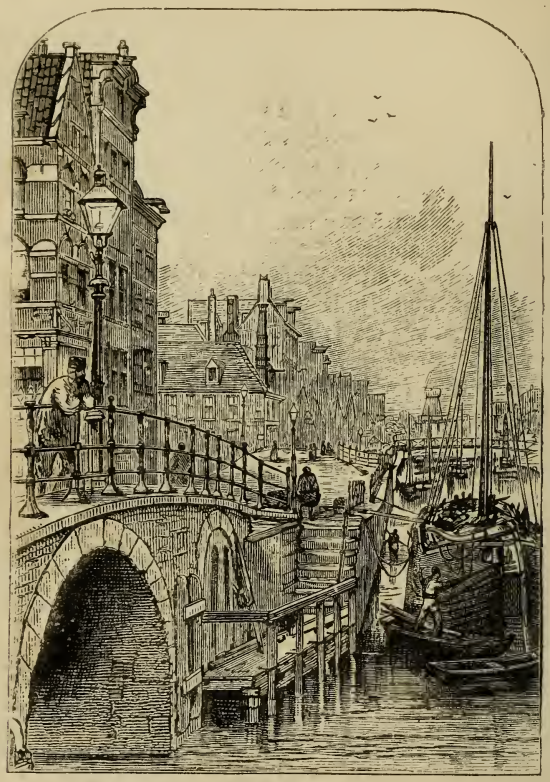
If you take coffee for breakfast, it is brought in hot and fragrant, in a bright silver pot; its very appearance is exhilarating, and you sit down at peace with all the world, and in a mood to grant even an enemy any favour he may demand. It is not until you come to drink the coffee that you frequently discover it is by no means first-rate. The making of tea is another and much more serious matter.

The waiter brings in a copper scuttle filled with glowing braize upon which reposes a copper kettle. The teapot is placed before you, and the tea is enclosed in a glass-stopper bottle. The quantity given for each person is by no means illiberal: the quality excellent. The one drawback to this process is that the water seldom boils. You wait; you lift up the lid of the kettle, and perhaps get an eye full of hot steam for your pains; you examine the expiring braize. At length you discover that the water is getting cold and your temper short: and in a weak moment you appeal to the waiter.

Vain appeal. He cannot and will not understand the plain and simple mystery of tea-making; the absolute necessity that the water shall boil. It boiled in the kitchen—surely that is enough! In the end he rushes off with the scuttle and disappears; reappears, red in the face, with another of the same description, and places it beside you, looking a mild protest. In despair you seize the kettle and make the tea before the water further recedes from that degree of temperature known as boiling-point.

Nevertheless, tea, and not coffee, is the staple beverage of Holland: and here we have one more instance, amongst many, in which the Dutch resemble the English.

Amsterdam is rich in art treasures. The picture gallery is perhaps the best in Holland; but the rooms are so badly constructed that the beauty of the paintings is often lost. The palace is a large square edifice of stone, but with little beauty of architecture. It stands on 13,659 piles driven 70 feet deep into the ground. It was originally built for the town-hall, but was turned into a palace by Bonaparte. Some of the state rooms are fitted up with white marble, and the ball-



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room is said to be the largest in Europe: 120 feet long, 60 feet wide, and about 100 feet high.

It was our fate to be in Amsterdam during the time when serious riots were expected. The Dutch have a fête once a year, which is called the Kermes: a similar fête to the Ducasse of the French and Flemish towns. Booths of every description are erected in a portion of the town devoted to that purpose, where the fair is held. All the servants and humbler orders of the place have two days' holiday, during which time they are completely their own masters, and have perfect liberty both throughout the day and throughout the night.

They make the most of their holiday, and for the time being become insanely riotous and careless of consequences.

Some years ago, the moral influence of the Kermes upon the town of Rotterdam being very disastrous, the corporation suddenly and summarily put an end to it for ever, and thus deprived the people of their holiday. A wise proceeding, but those most concerned were the last to perceive the wisdom. They rebelled, and a very serious riot and a good deal of bloodshed resulted.

Amsterdam, following in the wake of her sister city, determined to do likewise, but in a more leisurely manner. A proclamation was issued to the effect that in five years' time the Kermes would come to an end and be abolished. For five years they might make the best and the worst of their holiday; then bid it a long farewell. The years came to an end, and the period for the abolition of the Kermes arrived during our stay in Amsterdam.

Dutch Undertaker.

The town was in a ferment. The respectable inhabitants were trembling; some fled to other and quieter places of refuge: the lower orders were evidently preparing to be riotous and unruly. The town was gradually filled with soldiers, horse and foot. Everything indicated serious doings. A caution was issued by the mayor that no one should be out in the streets after ten o'clock at night, except at his own peril. Altogether the social atmosphere assumed a very pretty appearance. A rumour went forth one morning that during the night the mayor had eloped by his back door; but, as usual, the worthy man had been maliciously calumniated. At that very moment the courageous potentate was transacting business in the town hall, bold as a lion, and ready for martyrdom—or what was more probable, an escape into the country if it could be managed. This was found impracticable; and the worthy hero was kept a prisoner in the town hall for ten days and nights by the infuriated mob, shivering and shaking in his shoes, and expecting every moment to be his last.

But it turned out, after all, an affair of great cry and little wool. The Dutch no doubt are as fond of their own blood and their own lives as they are of their golden guldens. As soon as they saw the cavalry with their drawn swords and their ferocious countenances;

their black moustaches working up and down in the most terrific manner, like the jaws of a tiger thirsting for blood; they fell back to a respectable distance, turned tail, and pocketed their grievances. A little blood was spilt; a very few lives were lost; an immense deal of noise and riot and clamour took place for some days; but it was bark and not bite, and there the matter ended. The mayor at the expiration of ten days gave up shivering like an aspen, and became once more bold as a lion. The cadaverous hue of his countenance was put down to anxiety for the welfare of his people, not to any personal fear for himself.

It was my fortune one morning to witness a Dutch wedding in the New Church (built 1408) on the Dam, near the palace. A very singular performance was this wedding. It was a private affair, and at first the griffins guarding the doors would not allow me to enter. But upon discovering that I was a foreigner they exercised their courtesy and I was admitted. I went up to the portion of the church consecrated to weddings—a sort of west-end chancel surrounded by high railings and enclosed in great brass gates of fine workmanship. In this enclosure about four-and-twenty seats were ranged round in the form of a horse-shoe; the middle of the range consisting of a sofa for the bride and bridegroom. Friends of the happy couple who were mere lookers on were shown into seats that ran round the enclosure like stalls. Into one of these I was admitted.

After waiting for some time the organ struck up a lively strain, and having played for about ten minutes, a rustle, a tinkling bell, a hurrying and commotion amidst the vergers—or whatever they may style themselves—and the wedding party filed in. The men were most of them dressed in tail coats and white ties, conspicuous amongst them the bridegroom. The ladies wore bonnets and their ordinary attire, only a few appearing to have had new costumes for the occasion. The bride wore a pale silk dress and white net veil, with a wreath of flowers upon her head. She was really pretty, but pale and melancholy looking. The bridegroom had not been equally favoured by nature. His real and unmistakable ugliness (scarcely a polite word to use, but the only expression applicable to the present instance) marred the whole thing. The bridal party took their seats in solemn state and silence; all the ladies on the one side, all the gentlemen on the other. The ladies crossed their hands and looked conscious and demure; the gentlemen seemed to think they were in for a very good thing—probably the breakfast. Then entered the minister in a black gown, and immediately commenced a very violent and graphic discourse upon the pleasures, duties, and responsibilities of married life. Several of the unmarried ladies sighed and were visibly affected at his eloquence, thinking, no doubt, of the days of their youth, when they too were full of a hope not destined to be fulfilled. At the mention of the responsibilities of married life, the

bride's mother shook her bonnet until the feathers nodded and the beads rattled, and her eyes rained showers of tears.

Towards the end of the discourse the bride and bridegroom advanced alone, and knelt for a few moments before the minister, and then returned to their seats. After this two separate collections were made for the poor, and the marriage was over. During the entire ceremony the bridal party had never moved, either to stand up, or kneel down, or unite in prayer, with the slight exception mentioned of the bride and groom. The whole party filed out again to the lively strains of the splendid organ. As far as I can remember, no ring was put upon the bride's finger in church.

There was something cold and unsatisfactory about the ceremony, to a mere looker on and a stranger. And somehow, as I left the church, I could not help thinking of a marriage that had taken place in my own beloved England, where the ceremony commenced with a hymn, and the clerk, agreeably to vary matters according to his own taste and pleasure, gave out the first line in the following words :—

"Deluded souls, that dream of Heaven !"

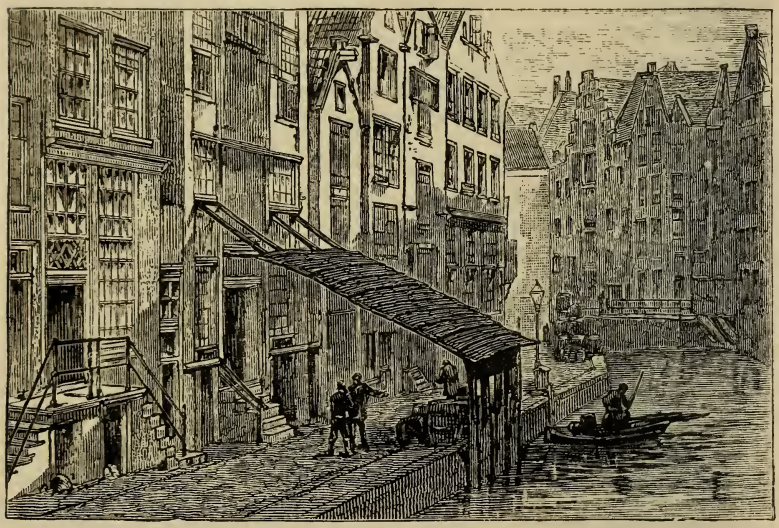
In that New Church in Amsterdam, there is one of the most beautifully-carved pulpits in the whole of Holland, perhaps in the world. And—it has escaped the paint brush.

That morning, on issuing from the church and crossing the Dam (the chief square of the town), I was astonished to see the Exchange crowded with boys, and to hear such a sound issuing forth of fun and laughter, shouting and hurrahing, drums, trumpets, fifes, and shrill penny whistles, as I had never before heard or conceived, and hope fervently never to hear again. In a moment of aberration I went up the steps into the interior. All parts of the great building were crammed to suffocation with urchins. Thousands of them were shouting and shrieking at the tops of their Dutch voices, beating their drums, and blowing their awful trumpets, rushing about like little imps, and scratching their rattles upon the backs of such bewildered folk as had the temerity to venture into their midst. For a moment I felt my senses reel. Then, recovering, I escaped from the place by patience and stratagem, and fled wildly from the Bedlam.

It appears that about the year 1660, an orphan boy, playing near the spot, discovered a plot of the Spaniards to blow up the place by means of a barge of gunpowder. In commemoration of this event, the merchants decreed that for ever after, on the first day of the fair, the Exchange should be given over to the boys of the town as a playground. And well they make use of their privilege, combining, in a few hours, the fun and frolic, the noise, uproar, and madness of 365 days. Of late years the merchants have endeavoured to put an end to the nuisance, but without success. Apparently it is more difficult to deal with boys than with men.

Whilst on the subject of boys it is worthy of record how very

curious it is to see the orphans belonging to some of the orphan asylums, as they go along the streets. Those of the Protestant Burgher School wear a costume that is a mixture of black and red; the jackets of the boys, the petticoats of the girls. They are red down the one side and black down the other. It gives them a startling appearance, more singular than picturesque. The girls of the Roman Catholic Orphanage are dressed in black with a white band round their head. One of the most curious costumes is that of a Dutch undertaker, who goes about in a tail coat, breeches, buckled shoes, and a cocked hat, from which streamers are suspended in a fashion far more suggestive of the humorous and the laughable than of the gravity and solemnity befitting that sombre and melancholy personage.



Jews' Quarter, Amsterdam.

Amsterdam is famous for its many charitable institutions, some of which are well worth a visit. When ruin was prophesied for the city from an anticipated attack of Louis XIV.'s armies, Charles II. exclaimed: "I am of opinion that Providence will preserve Amsterdam, if it were only for the great charity they have for their poor."

I have enlarged upon the virtues of Amsterdam to a much greater length than was my intention. I had wished to carry the reader to Haarlem, with its world-famed organ and picturesque town hall: to take him up the canal to Zaandam, once inhabited by Peter the Great, whose house is still exhibited. But these and many other excursions; including the quaint, curious, out-of-the-world Island of Marken; must form the theme of another paper.

Charles W. Wood.

MEMORY

WHERE good and evil hours
Are heaping fruits and flowers,
And buds—in her dim bowers to blossom never!
Under a dusky screen
Of luminous evergreen
Dwells Memory, gazing on the Past for ever.

The boughs that arch above her,
Are dear to friend and lover,
The tangled hazel cover is quick with sighs:
One broken violet,
With tears and kisses wet,
Is dearer to her heart than sacrifice.

The fields of long ago
In shadowy sunlight glow,
Whence words and whispers flow, and lovers talk,
And friends—a shining throng,
When gazed upon too long,
Turning to ghosts—together smile and walk.

Her wood-encumbered vales
Are full of nightingales,
When evening's planet pales the purple pines;
The fields her footsteps stir
Are warm with lavender,
Made dark by juniper, and ivy vines.

Dark wood of mystic wonder,
Oh, how much of love we squander,
Where our buried hopes yet wander to the last;
Under faintly flushing skies,
Looking love into our eyes,
From fields of Paradise—or of the Past.

O fair with tender fancies,
O wild with youth's romances,
O dark with purple pansies, and rich blooms—
Here—where no winds are blowing,
Are tears for ever flowing,
And mosses greenly growing over tombs!

Thus in a dusky screen
Of luminous evergreen
Dwells Memory blinded to all new endeavour,
Because for her no flowers
Bloom in the future's bowers,
The light of bygone hours burns on for ever.

C. M. GEMMER. (*Gerda Fay.*)

THE CHARM.

"TERESITA! ah, Teresita!" sang young Jermyn, as Thérèse Van Dest came into the room.

She tossed her head at him and then made a delicious little curtsey for his benefit.

"Come, Thérèse; come and finish this trimming: you know I shall be waiting for it."

The speaker was the elder sister, Louise. She spoke rather sharply, wishing William Jermyn anywhere else, hindrance that he was to all useful occupation.

Thérèse, thus admonished, came humming to her work as a bee to a flower; and in another moment was deep in the mysteries of ruffle and fringe.

"I am to have the corsage heart-shaped, you know, Louise; and the sleeves are to be trimmed in the shape of a Maltese cross—so," fashioning the muslin she held to suit her words and to indicate her ideas to Miss Van Dest.

"What do you know of Maltese crosses?" asked Jermyn, drawing nearer with quizzical interest. "Do you call that a Maltese cross, Teresita?" and his mischievous hand, touching, scattered at once her fashioned muslin. Thérèse left the print of three little teeth upon the said mischievous hand; whereat the young man cried out in simulated pain. In the next moment he was pressing his lips where hers had been.

"A kiss for a blow, you know, Teresita!" and he glanced at her a swift, dangerous glance, over Louise's intervening head.

"William Jermyn!" and Louise turned severely towards him, missing Teresita's blush, which Jermyn would not have missed for the world. "William Jermyn, go away, I beg of you, until Thérèse can finish what she has to do. You are like two children, both of you: idling when you should be at your work."

"Don't talk of work, Madame Louise, I entreat; it's a disagreeable subject."

He laughed good-humouredly. Louise was so staid, several years older than Thérèse, that he sometimes called her "Madame."

"How do you suppose you can get on, William Jermyn?" she asked. "Wasting your time here when you ought to be poring over your law books?"

"I have been poring over them all the morning, and I came here, done to death, for a little life-giving recreation."

"But you must not hinder us," returned Louise, gravely. "If Thérèse is to go to this party to-night her dress must be finished. You know we can no longer afford to pay a dressmaker."

The words brought Mr. Jermyn to his senses. He was sobered at once.

"Louise, I beg your pardon. I am a thoughtless fellow, but you shall see I will help the work I have hindered. Now wait; I'll show you a design worth two of that, Teresita. Maltese crosses, indeed! See this fancy, which all the Spanish girls drape their beautiful arms with on great days:" and Jermyn, who had employed his artist's eye to advantage in his foreign wanderings, sketched out on the envelope of a letter a "fancy" that drew forth even that cool, grave, worried Louise's admiration, and over which Thérèse was enthusiastic. And after this, while Thérèse sewed, he sat and watched her, making some quiet remark now and then, which went unreproved by Louise. She was a pretty thing to look at, was Teresita; as he would persist in calling her, after Garibaldi's lovely daughter in Mrs. Browning's poem: a pretty thing to look at, with her sweet eyes, her flickering colour, her graceful motions. And that day she was clad quaintly in a curious dress of black serge, with a deep frill of yellowish old lace at the throat, from which arose the stately little head, "sunning over with curls" of a deep chestnut brown. It was a dress for economy, Louise would have told you; yet, for all that, it looked like an artist's fashioning, and gave the otherwise gay brightness of the wearer a nun-like appearance, which was further carried out by the odd chain, or necklace, of dark carved beads which hung down like a rosary.

Mr. Jermyn, scanning her all over, began to think that he disapproved of this chain: it looked dark and heavy.

"Teresita, I cannot think why you wear that chain round your neck so often!"

"She wears it constantly," exclaimed Louise, a little reproachfully. For she did not much like the chain herself.

Thérèse flushed; but answered in quick defiance of them both.

"I wear it because my grandmamma told me to. Poor Aunt Joan wore it till she died, and then grandmamma locked it up; and one day she got it out and put it on my neck, and told me to wear it. And I am sure, William Jermyn, you know all this. Or you ought to know it."

"And how should William Jermyn know it?" put in Louise. "Has he not been always away of late years?—and what has he to do with the Freer part of the family? He belongs to the Van Dests, and is only our third or fourth cousin, child. But it was always a trait of the Van Dests to hold to its least link as if it were the nearest."

"I'm glad of it," exclaimed Teresita, with vigorous vehemence, so that both her auditors looked at her in surprise. But the moment the words escaped her, her face was in a dazzle of smiles and blushes. What was it she was glad of?—that he was only their third or fourth cousin? Louise felt no doubt upon the point; for she believed Thérèse disliked the young man.

But Mr. Jermyn put upon it a different interpretation as he met those dazzling eyes with a glance of triumph: he remembered a little girl who had once sat upon his knee when he was a boy of fifteen, and had lifted just those eyes to his, and in just that ringing voice had exclaimed, in a tone of decision: "I am glad you are not my first cousin, William Jermyn, because grandmamma says that first cousins may not marry: and I mean to marry you when you are a big man, and I am a big girl."

The boy was a big man now and the child had grown into a young woman: quite different from the pretty little elfling who had sat upon his knee. And he had forgotten a good deal about her, and, with the rest, her promise, until the charm of her maturer presence set him searching for every past remembrance. And here was a remembrance worth recalling, and suddenly he sees the child-face and hears the childish speech of ten years gone by, as again the same eyes, with deeper dewiness, the same speech, with sweeter syllables, repeats the same old words. And was he right?—was it that she was glad now for the same reason that she professed to be ten years ago, or was it for the Van Dest tradition of tenacity? Both were possible; how could he determine which was in her mind? When his college career had terminated, he went to study in Germany. And since he had come back, and entered into the profession that he meant to make his own, he had never been quite able to determine what was in Teresita's mind; never been quite able to tell how much was child, how much was woman; how much was play, how much was earnest, through all the variations of her manner. Sometimes she seemed so frank he thought there was nothing left in her for him to discover: at the next meeting, a mocking elf baffled him. And again it was a serious, pensive woman, almost a nun; and anon a simple child. She looked something like the nun now, as she, her work dropped, touched the brown beads with a caressing hand. All in a moment, the thread broke—perhaps it had been worn too long—and the beads fell in her lap.

"There!" she cried. And, pulling at the string, there came out from the folds of her gown a curious appendage. It was a dark oblong object, banded here and there with glistening steel, and it fell on the carpet.

Mr. Jermyn picked it up, and looked at it curiously.

"Take care of that," cried Louise, with a slighting laugh. "Thérèse looks upon it as a charm: it is for that she wears the necklace."

"Why," said the young man, "it is nothing in the world but one of those nuts that Uncle Michael used to bring home from his voyages to India. It is darkened by age and further disguised by this queer steel flummery round about it. Fie, Teresita, it is an Indian fetish you have been wearing all this time!" And the young man laughed provokingly.

Teresita had a vein of superstition running through her nature. She believed in various signs and omens, and held to old family legends with tenacious pleasure, and as she did believe in this amulet, she retorted sharply.

"Mr. Jermyn, you know nothing about it whatever. If my Grandmother Freer, whose sense you can hardly doubt, sir, thought fit to preserve this old relic as a memento of the past, and if she half believed it to be associated, as the tradition runs, with the prosperity of the family, it is scarcely meet for her descendants to cast scorn upon it."

She spoke with great dignity, giving a stately glance both at her sister and her cousin. Louise smiled: she had no superstition whatever; but she was fond of her pretty sister, and liked to humour her. William Jermyn looked at them both, scarcely understanding.

"Teresita, you don't really mean to say that you believe in that little relic of an amulet—that you think it keeps harm from you—or gives any blessing?"

"Never mind what I think, sir. Why did you say it was no better than one of Uncle Michael's nuts?"

"My dear child—I grant you it is not a nut. It is a little amulet, carved the same as the chain. But I think it is rather a clumsy ornament to wear. And you surely do not believe that it has any protecting properties!"

Teresita had sought out some fine twine, dark and strong, and was threading the beads again. She melted at his gentleness, and the fire went out of her eyes.

"I can't say that I really believe anything about it, William Jermyn; but it has a singular charm for me, and I know I had rather lose all the trinkets my Grandmother Freer left me than this. It may be because it looks so mysterious, because nothing positive can be told of it, except that its possession in the family was held to bring good luck. You cannot deny, Louise, that grandmamma believed that."

Louise nodded. The young girl continued.

"And it had a certain poetic interest, from the fact that it was always worn by grandmamma's sister-in-law, the beautiful Aunt Joan, whose picture hangs in the library. You know her history, William. For two or three years before her death she was insane, in a quiet, melancholy, harmless sort of way. She was superstitiously attached to this chain and amulet, never letting them be off her neck: and once, when she accidentally broke the thread, as I have done now, her distress was terrible. Grandmamma used to tell all these things in her fascinating manner until they seemed to be as much a part of my remembrance as hers. She was deeply attached to Aunt Joan; and I think she loved the amulet—or charm, as Aunt Joan called it—for her sake: and I think, too, that she must have become imbued with a little of Aunt Joan's superstition regarding it. Any way, I am

quite sure that when grandmamma at last hung the amulet round my neck and charged me to take care of it, she thought she was giving me a great gift."

"And, therefore, you treasure them," remarked Mr. Jermyn, as he rose to take his leave.

"Yes. Would not you?"

"I would," he answered, laughing: "though I don't go so far as to say that I should wear them always: or look upon the amulet as a charm that would keep me from evil. Fare you well, Teresita. Good afternoon, Louise."

They returned his salutation; Louise with right good will. She had no love for boy and girl folly, as she regarded this wasting of time, and she was anxious to get the work finished.

In the days gone by, there lived in this good old-fashioned mansion—which stood amidst its own land a mile or two removed from the bustling metropolis—one Marcus Freer: a wealthy gentleman and a courtly, quite of the old school. The estate was his, and other property besides. He had a wife and an only child—a daughter. The daughter, indulged and self-willed, married Mr. Van Dest; married him in spite of her father. Mr. Van Dest was of good family, but poor; Miss Freer was, or would be, very rich: some people thought that Mr. Freer might have set the one's poverty against the other's wealth; and, perhaps, had it been anybody but Mr. Van Dest he would have done so. But between the Freers and the Van Dests ran a long-continued feud, originating in a lawsuit; and Mr. Freer hated young Van Dest, and would not give way one iota to his daughter's love. The Van Dests, originally from French Flanders, had settled here a generation or two ago. William Jermyn's mother was a cousin of theirs.

Miss Freer married Mr. Van Dest. Not exactly in defiance—at least, she did not look upon it as such, for she was supplicating ever for her father's consent, and she fully believed that he would run to offer his forgiveness at the very church door, she, his cherished daughter. Not so. Mr. Freer was implacable. And the first thing he did was to make a fresh will and leave his daughter's name out of it. A few years went on, and then Mr. Van Dest, never very strong, died. Mr. Freer relented a little then; and yielding to his wife's earnest persuasion, he received his daughter home again, with her two little children, Louise and Thérése. Again the years went on, and Mr. Freer himself died. When his will was searched for, the one only to be found was that which he had made disinheriting his daughter. Everything was left to his wife for her life: at her death it all went to a distant relative, one Squire Ford. Old Mrs. Freer was surprised: she knew that her husband had made a later will. But no fresh will could be found, and the other had to be acted upon.

Before Mr. Freer died, a great tribulation had come upon him. His sister Joan, so renowned for her beauty as to be called the

beautiful Miss Freer, and who was many years younger than himself, had fallen into melancholy. This went on to positive insanity. She was never sufficiently insane to be sent from her home; but had to be confined to her own apartments. She had always resided with her brother and his wife, never having married. When her niece (of whom she was very fond) married Mr. Van Dest, it affected her bitterly. She shared in all the family hatred of the Van Dests, and openly said she would rather have seen Louisa die than marry Van Dest. Neither (unlike her brother) did she ever forgive Louisa; and when the latter came back with her two children, Aunt Joan could never persuade herself to be cordial with them. The melancholy set in, and it ended in insanity: but the poor lady was always placid, always gentle. Death became busy with the Freer household. Mrs. Van Dest was the first to go; Mr. Freer next; then Aunt Joan; and finally Mrs. Freer.

Now came in all the terrible distress that such a will entailed. During Mrs. Freer's life time it was not felt; perhaps was hardly thought of by the two young girls, her granddaughters. Louise and Thérèse Van Dest had now to realise the fact that they were penniless. Save for a few odds and ends of personal effects of their grandmother's, and for a small sum of money that she had saved, but she was ever improvident, they had absolutely nothing. All the property, including the grand old house and its furniture, belonged now to Squire Ford and his sons: these distant relatives who had no claim to it, who had not expected it and did not want it, for they had plenty of money of their own. The old Squire, whom they had never seen, lived a hundred miles away. When he found that he had inherited, he wrote to the late Mr. Freer's solicitors and also to the young ladies themselves, intimating that for a twelvemonth at least he should not think of entering into possession of the house, and expected that the young ladies would remain in it for that period of time as their home. But he said not a word about adding to their means, or settling any small income upon them. The more one has, the more one wants.

That twelvemonth had now nearly expired, and Louise and Thérèse were looking out for another home. They had gladly taken advantage of the offer (though many girls would not, under the circumstances), and stayed in the house, discharging all the servants but one, and living in the most simple manner. But to live ever so simply takes money in these expensive days, and very little was left in hand of what Mrs. Freer had been able to bequeath them. It was necessary that they should do something for a living, and they were already looking out privately for situations as governesses. Louise accepted the position without a murmur; Thérèse wept in the solitude of her chamber. They had already passed from the luxury of a costly household to one of strict economy and restraint; now they were to pass to servitude; what the next change would be, neither of them could foresee.

"It is our destiny, I suppose," grumbled Thérèse, when the negotiations for their going out were finally completed. "I wonder, Louise, whether we shall quite die of it?"

"Don't be silly, child," reproved Miss Van Dest.

II.

"And what comes next? The Deluge?"

This question was from Mr. Jermyn. He sat before Louise, pulling angrily and fiercely at his moustache. She had been telling him of their plans—that she and Thérèse were both going out as governesses.

"We have no other resource, William."

"But you are gentlewomen!"

"Reduced," added Louise. "What else is there for reduced gentlewomen to turn to? Would you have us keep a shop?"

"But you are so unfitted for it."

"Excellently well fitted for it, I think," she returned, correcting him. "We have both enjoyed a first-rate education."

"Louise," he said after a pause, the moustache being pulled more fiercely than ever in utter unconsciousness, "would Teresita let me stand between her and this alternative, do you think? You know what my income is."

"William Jermyn!"

"Yes, I love her, Louise; and I want her."

Louise shook her head. "I must speak plainly, William: it would be the sheerest folly to begin on such an income. It is barely enough for yourself, and the end might be worse than the beginning."

"But, Louise, I shall soon be making money, and so adding to it."

"How do you know that? It is what all young barristers think. Recollect the risk."

"Yes, yes, I know, Louise; but it is hard to see you both going away to this servitude."

"Does she love you, Mr. Jermyn?"

A pang struck him at this question, for his instinct had not served him to discover the state of Teresita's heart. He feared she did not. Louise felt sure she did not.

"I fear you have been nourishing a chimera, William, if you have nourished the idea that she cares for you. My impression is that it is just the contrary. She is no better than a wayward child, either; only nineteen a month ago."

"Do you mind my asking her?"

"I have no right to mind it," said Louise: "better for you, perhaps, that you should set the matter at rest. But there must be no question of marriage yet, in any case, you understand. Upon your small income ——"

"But if Teresita should consider it large enough?"

"She could not. She is very silly; but she is not silly enough for that. Here she is!"

Teresita came in, singing unconsciously, breaking off her song to drop a saucy curtsey of mock ceremony to Mr. Jermyn. Louise left the room, and Teresita sat down and took up her work. He waited to see if she would speak of the new plan; but she talked of twenty other things in twenty minutes, and never alluded to it. He got out of patience at this.

"Teresita, why don't you tell me you are going out as governess?" he broke out at last.

"Because Louise has already told you," and she laughed at him gaily over her strip of hemming.

"How did you know that?"

"How? I can't tell; I felt it in the atmosphere, I suppose; and you looked so savage, too."

His eyes lighted. "You knew I should feel it deeply, Teresita."

"Yes, I knew it would be a sword thrust into the Van Dest pride."

A streak of colour flashed across his brow. "And you didn't think I might have other thoughts—that I might feel a man's pity for women thus situated?" he exclaimed, impatiently.

She looked up at him quickly. Louise had not returned, and the twilight was falling. The hour, the circumstances, were tempting him to full confession; but over it all rose Louise's words, her warning, and more than all, her embargo, concerning the smallness of his present means. Teresita's eyes had dropped after that one quick glance. There was a waiting hush for a few minutes; in it you could have heard every movement of leaf and bird and insect outside the open window. Something in the girl's expression of face warned him not to speak—told him that his suit would be rejected.

Suddenly she rose from her seat, went to the other end of the room and sat down to the piano. A loud crash of chords broke the silence, which had, perhaps, become slightly embarrassing to her, combined with Jermyn's steadfast looks. She was playing a gay, light, spirited fantasia. Louise, hearing it, came back, bringing a lighted taper. The flame, flaring brilliantly in the spring wind, fell on the player. It showed to Louise a sweet, cold face, unlit by any look of emotion. The face of Jermyn she could not see; it was turned toward the dark, rainy night. Without a word, Louise knew that Jermyn had not spoken, and her heart uttered a thanksgiving.

"And where is it that you think of going?" he asked of Louise, as the fantasia came to an end and Teresita turned round on the music-stool.

"I am going to Holly Hill, to Sir George Meredith's," she answered. "Thérèse is going to the Anthonys. A family ——"

"To the Anthonys! How odd!"

"Why odd?"

He laughed; evidently a forced laugh. "Well, because—because I know them, I suppose."

He was looking in an entirely different direction, but he knew that Teresita's eyes were turned toward him.

"What do you know of them, Mr. Jermyn?" asked Louise. "You must tell me."

"Nothing very terrible, Louise; only that they are not of your kind. I don't think Teresita will like being there."

"But why not?"

"As society goes now, and wealth is the one thing considered, the Anthonys would call themselves gentlepeople, I suppose. But they have never been so yet, and were not reared so. They are purse-proud; and Mrs. and Miss Anthony have not, I should judge, much regard for the feelings of others, especially for a governess. Wilfully unkind, they may not be; but they will lack thought and consideration."

"Well, we must not look for perfection; we work for hire, not for consideration," answered Louise, with grim resolution. And then again in a moment she resumed: "I daresay we were not easy task-mistresses either. I remember I used to give a vast deal of trouble to my governesses."

Teresita sat silent, tranquilly occupied over the strip of hemming she had taken up again at the table. Even her face was passive. But Louise was full of questions.

"Tell me about the Anthonys, Mr. Jermyn. Is it a large family? I only knew there were two young children."

"Yes, there are the two children and two grown-up daughters, though I don't know whether the second calls herself 'out,' and two sons."

"Sons! Are they grown-up?"

"They are the eldest of all. One of them, George, is in the army: Robert is an engineer." As he paused a moment, a red streak again flushed his brow. "Handsome, gentlemanly fellows both of them," he concluded in a firm, decided tone.

Still Teresita sewed tranquilly and silently; but Louise's keen glance swept from one to another, reading each of them, she thought. Jermyn was restless and moody; now standing at the window, looking out on the star-lit evening, now leaving it to pace the room. All his gracious gaiety of manner had forsaken him.

"How soon do you leave?—and go?" he asked.

"The beginning of next month—June," Louise answered, with a sad note in her voice, glancing towards the garden where next month would find her roses all in bloom.

"And the old house? What is to become of it?"

"We know nothing. Only that we shall leave it for ever."

He stamped his foot impatiently. "And it ought to be yours,

every rood of it! And Eastburn ought to be yours; and the whole Freer estates! There never was so unjust a will made since the world began!"

"But it is a very common thing for a father to disinherit a child who marries against his wish," said Louise calmly.

Jermyn laughed a short bitter laugh. "Common it may be where there is sufficient cause; but why should your proud Grandfather Freer make so unreasonable an opposition to a Van Dest?"

A faint smile flickered across Teresita's lips and died in a sigh. But Louise answered as coolly as ever. Her temperament was so perfectly equable.

"You forget, Mr. Jermyn: it was not a matter of pride. The Van Dests were as good a family as the Freers."

"I should think so," ejaculated Jermyn with swift emphasis.

Louise paid no heed to this; but again there flickered across Teresita's lips that curious, faint smile.

"As good a family as the Freers," added Louise. "Though he, my father, had no wealth, you know, to carry out the Freer magnificence to which my mother had been accustomed. But it was not the poverty that influenced my grandfather; he had no moneyed ambiition for his children, for he felt himself—and indeed he was—something of a prince, with the great Freer estates of those days. But there was the old feud, you know, which had been transmitted from father to son, and he hated and distrusted all that branch of the Van Dest family. And directly after my mother's marriage he made this will, in his anger, disinheriting her. Grandmamma said he did make another will, revoking the first, and the lawyers confirmed it. But you know all this. No other will was found; it was supposed he repented of it afterwards and destroyed it, retaining only the former one, by which——"

"By which you are wronged!" interposed Jermyn fiercely. He stopped suddenly here in his walk. "Louise, with all this old story haunting your mind so closely, did never a suspicion of foul play suggest itself to you?"

Miss Van Dest's quiet face relaxed into a half-amused, a half-derisive smile.

There *had* been suspicions of it, she said, chiefly entertained by good old Rachel, her grandmamma's maid. Not by anyone else, that she knew of; such suspicions were too fanciful and absurd for common daylight: in the nineteenth century people did not destroy wills—except in novels.

"I wonder where the lost will was deposited?" mused Jermyn.

"In this house. Grandmamma said so. Her husband brought it home himself from the lawyers, and locked it up. And there was no one here to play false: only himself, grandmamma, and Aunt Joan—besides the servants."

"Where were the Fords then?"

"Where they are now—at their own place in Devonshire. You must remember that nobody, save the lawyer, Mr. Drake, knew that the Fords were as much as mentioned in the will. They did not know it; grandmamma did not."

"You do believe then, Louise, that Mr. Freer destroyed the later will himself?"

"Certainly I do. Grandpapa had a most perverse and unreliable temper."

"And the effect of this perversity falls upon you. And those Ford cousins, with none of the Freer open-handedness and all the Freer cold-bloodedness, profit by it!"

"We want nothing that is not ours—we want nothing of the Fords!" exclaimed Louise.

"But it *is* yours; an equal portion of the Freer property is yours by every law of justice; and if the Fords had been honourable, high-minded people, they would have at once righted the great wrong that has been done you."

"William Jermyn, you are chimerical. The Fords have done as the world generally does—no worse, no better."

Rising as she spoke, Miss Van Dest proceeded to put her sewing away. The young man knew it was his signal—that his evening with them was at an end and he must be going.

"I have been asking your sister whether I could be allowed to stand between you and this degradation of going out to the Anthonys. Can it be, Teresita?"

He stood before her, speaking in a low tone. Louise was over at the work-table by the door, and did not see or hear. Thérèse looked up at him, half startled—but her face regained its impassiveness at once, and she answered coldly and calmly.

"No. Thank you: but—*no*."

"Good night, Teresita."

"Good night, Mr. Jermyn," and into his open palm there came a little light, cold touch, as if a snowflake had fallen at his invitation.

"She does not care for me, she never did," he thought sadly as he went forth into the misty night. "And where she goes my heart will always follow. But I know how it will be; one of those confoundedly good-looking Anthonys will get her. Ah, there's a fate in it—there's a fate in it!"

III.

Teresita had been in her servitude a month. Brief as the time was, it had changed her a good deal. Shy, sensitive, and proud, it was a natural consequence that she should suffer in her present position, for Jermyn had prophesied with true instinct of the treatment she would find in the Anthony family. They were not naturally unkind, but worldly and inconsiderate. Just at first, Mrs. Anthony and her

elder daughters seemed to remember who and what Miss Thérèse Van Dest was, and to accord her consideration: but that did not last a week, and she was allowed to sink into the exact position occupied by former governesses.

As to William Jermyn himself, Teresita had not seen him since she entered upon her new life. Whether he were one of the evening guests, whose tones reached her faintly now and then in her distant room, she did not know, but, if so, he had given her no sign of his presence; and what wonder that she should remember with some bitterness all he had said to her the night before she left her old home. He had seemed then so kind, so sorry; he had held her hand in farewell so warmly, repeating the words over and again: "Remember, remember, Teresita, I shall come to see you very soon." She did remember. With painful pertinacity, too, her mind went back to that other evening when he had appeared so disconcerted at hearing she was going out, to—as he expressed it—a place of service. Well, it was little better. She was at the beck and call of the unruly children: she was put down as an inferior by Miss Belle Anthony. But he never came to see whether it was so or not; he appeared to have forgotten that she existed. Pride was the besetting sin of the Van Dest family: perhaps she and Louise had fatally wounded him by doing what they had done, and he had thrown them up.

A whole month! Four weeks of loneliness amid strangers! It was very hard upon this delicate girl, who had lived so happy a home life. But it was better to be utterly alone in her own room, after her duties were over, than to be summoned, as she had been once or twice, to play for the children down stairs. There, visitors of the family had dropped in, and Teresita had felt painfully that she had no longer any place but that of an alien. She was not introduced to people: nobody seemed to consider her at all.

One evening, at the end of these four weeks, she was sitting in her chamber, thinking of all this, when there came one of the summonses she dreaded. The youngest child, a girl of ten, ran in, loud and common.

"Miss Van, you are to come down and play to us. We want to dance."

Miss Van—it was the way in which the young ones chose to contract her name—knitted her brow and paused.

"Who is there, Julia?"

"Nobody: only ourselves. Belle and Lizzie want to try a new figure with us, and you are to play."

She went down; she might not refuse. It was certainly a relief to find the drawing-room free of guests, and she fervently hoped it would remain so. But while Miss Belle was whirling about to her playing, there came a ring at the door-bell which stayed the whirling feet, and before Teresita could find time to excuse herself and escape, the dreaded visitors were already in the room. But she hoped, by

remaining quiet in the remote alcove where the piano stood, that she should evade notice. She sat on, leaning her head upon her hand: the hum and buzz of conversation reaching her ear. Then she heard the entrance of another guest, and then the voice of Miss Belle.

"Why, Mr. Jermyn, what a stranger you are!"

Teresita started a little: and the next thing she heard was Jermyn's reply.

"Yes, I have been ill. I have scarcely been out of the house, until to-day, for a month."

"And what has been the matter with you?" asked Mrs. Anthony.

"A sort of low fever, I believe. Nothing dangerous, but the doctor kept me quiet, lest it should go on to danger."

Teresita, looking up from her obscure corner, felt a thrill of thanksgiving and pain at one and the same time. She could see him as she sat; could see how pale and thin he looked: and only herself knew how her heart beat, how it went out to him.

"Dancing?—no, thank you, Miss Belle; not to-night," Teresita next heard him say in answer to the young lady. "To tell you the truth, I was hardly up to coming out to-night, but I wanted to see my cousin. She is with you, I believe?"

"Your cousin?"

"My cousin: Miss Thérèse Van Dest."

"But she is not your cousin?"

"Indeed she is. My name, though perhaps you may not know it, is Van Dest Jermyn. And—why, there she sits!" he broke off. "Teresita!"

Looking up she saw a glowing face and an outstretched hand coming toward her; and then there was a confused greeting.

The Anthonys were thoroughly surprised; perhaps not altogether pleased. Mr. Jermyn, a rising man, was one of their most welcome visitors: there appeared to be a sort of presumption in a governess claiming cousinship with him.

"We had not an idea of it," spoke Miss Belle, haughtily.

She turned her attention, as did Mrs. Anthony, to the other guests, more of whom came in, leaving Mr. Jermyn a few moments in the remote alcove.

So, once more William Jermyn found himself alone with Teresita. Looking in her face he saw what she had suffered. It was pale and weary and sad. The blithe youthfulness was already fading swiftly and surely. A pang of fear smote him, for he knew something of the delicacy of her constitution. He knew, too, how sorrow and pining had killed more than one Van Dest. And, thinking of this, he forgot Louise's warning, forgot that "No," of Teresita's, forgot every uncertainty, and, in a few vehement words, whispered out the tale of his passion. For a moment he was sure that she loved him; for into her face flushed a light and a bloom that transformed it to radiance:

but in the next moment it had gone, and her answer was troubled and discouraging.

"No, no. You must not think of it. It cannot be."

"But why?" he asked.

She did not say why. She only remained cold as a statue in answer to all his impassioned pleading; reiterating again the No—no.

With a heavy heart he turned to leave her: he had seen Mrs. Anthony glance towards them once or twice.

"Is this irrevocable, Teresita?"

"Entirely irrevocable."

"Good-bye, then, Teresita," he said sadly.

She put out her hand, and an expression he could not fathom came into her face. She hesitated a moment, then faltered a little and became a little paler.

"Will you—is it selfish in me to ask you to be my cousin just the same—to come and see me now and then?" she asked. "I have so few friends, you know, Mr. Jermyn."

The tears dimmed his eyes at the pathos of her tone.

"Yes, yes, I will come, Teresita." And with this promise, and a clasp of the hand, he left her.

He was true to his promise. He told Mrs. Anthony that he must, with her permission, be allowed to call occasionally on his cousin, who had no other relative to do so—and he was but a distant one. Mrs. Anthony graciously acceded after a moment's hesitation: and begged his pardon for putting a question.

"May I venture to ask if you are engaged to your cousin, Mr. Jermyn?"

"I am not. So far as I know, I never shall be."

So he called now and then. Thérèse was always pleased to see him, always cordial in a cousinly way; but there it ended. One jealous fear began to torment the young barrister—that she was falling in love with George Anthony, and he with her.

"*That's* what will be the end of it," he thought with anguish.

IV.

"Thérèse, you look just as though you were pining yourself to death!"

The impulsive words broke from Miss Van Dest. This was the first time she had come to see Thérèse, though eight months had elapsed since they quitted their home. The family in which Louise lived (as chaperon and companion, more than as governess, to one young lady) had taken her away with them travelling, and she had but now returned.

"I am very well," said Thérèse.

"But I say you are not well. Are these Anthonys exacting—inconsiderate?"

"Not at all. At least, not more so than other people would be, Louise."

Louise looked at her keenly. "I have heard a rumour, Thérèse—that you are in love."

"In love! Who told you that?"

"William Jermyn. I met him this morning as I came here. He says that one of the young Anthonys—George, I think—is only waiting for you to say 'Yes,' to his suit."

A stream of colour made Thérèse's cheeks crimson; her eyes danced a little as of old. See knew very well by this time what Mr. Jermyn thought about George Anthony; but she had never sought to undeceive him. What could it be to Jermyn?

"Mr. Jermyn is very foolish, Louise; quite mistaken. George Anthony is nothing to me,"

"He wanted you himself, you know, Thérèse."

"Who did?"

"William Jermyn."

"Did he! He is very absurd."

"I know you always disliked him. But what is it that is the matter with you, Thérèse? Your cheeks are pale, your eyes weary. I am sure you are pining."

"Perhaps I am," carelessly answered Thérèse.

Louise, direct, unimaginative, and full of that active desire which such persons have to right things, was now entirely puzzled. Greatly impatient of what seemed to her this useless pining, she began to scold Thérèse heartily, but with no unkind intent. She was in the full tide of a very earnest appeal, when Teresita gave a sudden little terrified cry, which made her break off.

"What *is* the matter, Thérèse?"

"My amulet, my amulet! Just look, Louise!"

Thérèse, listening (or not listening) to her sister's scolding, had been leaning from the open window. Her chain of beads, hanging down, had caught in the hinge of the large blind, and became fixed there. She could neither disengage it nor stir it. Louise, running to see what was the matter, saw her pulling and tugging—but all with tender gentleness—and Louise was quite irate.

"Such child's play, Thérèse! To make a cry over that thing! I'm sure I thought you must have torn your hand!"

"It is my charm, Louise."

"Charm! What charm has it had for you? What good has it ever brought you? Here! take your fingers away, child, while I disengage it."

With no very gentle hand, she gave the blind a wrench. There was a slight crash, and—the amulet was broken.

"Oh, Louise, Louise, what have you done?"

"Yes, I see. I am very sorry: I would not have done it willingly. But don't be a baby, Thérèse! We can get it mended, I daresay."

Louise, really sorry, but ashamed to manifest her sorrow, took refuge in crossness. In this spirit she went back to her chair; while Thérèse, through foolish, blinding tears, was regarding the ruin of her treasure. It was hopelessly crushed, though still retaining its form; but at a touch of her hand it fell apart, and there rattled out—what was it?

Not a shrunk and withered kernel, as they had sometimes opined that the nut contained; not the little dry bones of an inner shell. Did a withered kernel ever take such shape as this? did dry bones ever wear such practical colour and resemblance? Here in her hand lay a tiny key, a quaintly-fashioned key, which this mysterious relic disclosed, the gilding only slightly dimmed by its long seclusion. Folded tightly across the rim was a strip of tarnished paper. Unrolling it, Thérèse glanced at her sister. Miss Van Dest was gazing with open eyes, astonished for once in her life. But she did not quit her seat. Thérèse read:

"This is the key to my Indian escritoire, wherein I have buried the great Freer wrongdoing. Justice shall find its own again."

"What can this mean, Louise?" Forgetful now of the destruction of her treasure, Thérèse went over to her sister, holding out the broken amulet, the key, and the scrap of paper. Miss Van Dest turned a little pale as she took them into her own hands. Was a possible solution striking her?

"Whose writing is this, Louise?"

"Aunt Joan's," answered Louise, briefly.

"Yes, I was nearly sure of it—but it is very cramped. What can it all mean? And what does she mean by her Indian escritoire?"

Louise waited a moment, thinking; then spoke rather slowly and thoughtfully.

"I believe she must mean that old piece of carved wood which we children used to call her Indian idol. I remember how she used to keep it at the head of her bed, and what store she set by it."

"That old black thing! *I* used to call it a bogey."

"That old black thing—yes."

"But that could not turn out to be an escritoire, Louise. How could it? I daresay this is only one of poor Aunt Joan's delusions."

Louise Van Dest did not reply. She still sat poring over that slip of paper, and turning the little key over and over in her hand. By-and-by she looked up.

"Thérèse, do you think you could get leave to go out with me?"

"What—now?"

"Now. I should like to see the end of this—whether the key has anything to do with that black idol, or not. We will go to the old house together, and ascertain—if Mrs. Anthony will spare you."

Mrs. Anthony, after saying something about the unreasonableness of her governess wanting to absent herself in study hours, and that she supposed it was only to buy a new bonnet, or some nonsense

of that kind, gave an unwilling consent; and the two sisters went forth together.

The old mansion was just as they left it. Its new inheritor had been ill with a long illness, and had not yet come to take possession. The person in charge of it was the same elderly woman who had been the sole attendant on the Miss Van Dests after their fallen fortunes.

She received them with grateful tears: the unexpected sight of them was good for her, she said. They told her what had happened, and went with her in search of the Indian idol.

It was standing where it always had stood—atop of the canopy of poor Aunt Joan's bed. Neither bed nor room had been occupied since Joan left it. The woman stood upon a chair, took down the idol, dusted it, and handed it to the young ladies. It was shaped somewhat like a man's head—which had given rise to the children naming it an Indian idol—and was beautifully carved. Louise handled it attentively.

"Yes—do you see—here is a small keyhole. The thing opens in the middle. Thérèse, we must take a street cab, and carry it to Mr. Drake's."

Thérèse was surprised. "But I should like to open it now."

"I daresay you would! You are just a child and nothing better. This thing must be opened in the presence of people in authority. How do we know what it may contain?"

"Do *you* know, Louise?"

"No. But I fancy I can guess."

Mr. Drake was the family lawyer. They drove to his office with the Indian idol, and found him at home. He listened to the brief explanation Louise gave him of their presence, and then, with an imperturbable face, took the Indian idol into his hands and examined it.

"I have a fancy that the lost will may be in this," said Louise.

"Will you give me the key, Miss Van Dest?"

The key fitted perfectly in the half-concealed lock, which Mr. Drake found at once. A creak, a snap, and back upon its hinges flew the half of the little dark relic, and revealed a very curious escritoire, like a small writing-desk, filled with old papers. Some of them were tied into packets with pink or blue ribbon: they related no doubt to the romance and disappointment which poor Miss Joan had gone through in early life. But these packages Mr. Drake pushed aside, and drew forth a folded paper, fresher looking than the rest—a long, folded paper, and a black-covered book—evidently a diary.

He opened the paper. Then his countenance slightly changed: something like a light came into the cool face. But he read it quite through, and, without speaking a word, proceeded to examine the diary. The light in his face became more perceptible, at last

amounting to a glow, as he turned to the two young ladies and spoke.

"Miss Van Dest, you are right. Here is the latest will your grandfather made, and here is the secret of its hiding, in your Aunt Joan's diary. Madness, like murder, is prone to confessions. Apparently for no reason but to write it down for her own pleasure, she has recorded in her diary the reason for this hiding. She seems to have been vexed that her brother (your grandfather) should have made a will in his daughter's favour after her disobedience: she did not think it right, she says, that Mr. Van Dest's children (yourselves) should inherit the Freer property. Poor thing!"

"But—is the will really right, Mr. Drake? Will it restore to us our own?"

"Entirely."

"People will not doubt the will?"

Mr. Drake smiled. "If anyone were inclined to doubt this will's authenticity, the signature of Jacob Wright—old Jacob, you remember, who was your grandfather's secretary—would prove it to be genuine beyond any question. There was never, I believe, such another chirography as old Jacob's. And now, young ladies, I heartily congratulate you. You can go back to your own house to-morrow."

"There's Mr. Ford?" said Louise.

"Mr. Ford has no more claim on the house or property now than I have," spoke the lawyer. "He will know that. I shall write to him to-day."

But the congratulations and the business talk that followed were heard as in a far-off dream by Thérèse. Poor little Teresita—dear little Teresita—the dark clouds were clearing out of the sky for her at last.

They returned to the home to spend the rest of the day. As Louise observed, there was so much to be thought of and said, connected with this wonderful change. Louise wanted to write a note or two; and Mr. Drake placed his office-boy at their disposal to convey the notes to their destination.

One was to Mrs. Anthony, saying Thérèse could not return to her until the evening, and then it would be for a few days only, while the lady suited herself with another governess. The other was to ask William Jermyn to come down.

"He will advise us about everything, you know, Thérèse," she said. "I must consult with him."

Thérèse answered nothing. Instead of that, she began to hum a careless song.

"I suppose there will be no impediment now to George Anthony's suit, Thérèse," said Mr. Jermyn, after his amazement had subsided, and Miss Van Dest had departed from the room in search of some papers.

"For shame, sir!" Thérèse answered. And to his utter consternation, she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"Teresita! dear Teresita! What have I said? *Don't* you like George Anthony?"

"I hate him. You know I do. He knows it."

What with the words, the tears, and what with a half-reproachful glance from Teresita's eyes, Mr. William Jermyn came to his senses. He folded his arms round her and let her sob out her grief upon his breast.

"But what was the reason that you treated me so coldly, and rejected me, Teresita?"

"Would I hamper you by marrying you upon your little bit of an income? It would have kept you down for life. You once said, yourself, a long while ago—I heard you say it, William—that for a poor briefless barrister to marry early was just ruin."

"What an idiot I was!"

"No, you were not, sir. But things have altered now: and I —I shan't be able to count all my money."

"Your money—there it is! I fear I ought not to aspire to you now."

"Oh, you can take Louise instead if you like."

Louise chanced to come in at the moment, and stood transfixed with amazement. Mr. Jermyn was kissing her sister.

"Well, I'm sure!" she cried. "Thérèse!"

"She is mine now, Louise. Teresita!—my Teresita!"

"And I hope you will never call in question my superstitions again, either of you," cried Teresita, saucily, blushing and smiling, and escaping to a distance. "Aunt Joan's amulet contained a charm, after all. But for that ——"

"But for that I might have missed my Teresita," he interrupted, sadly. "We might have grown old, and never found one another. Teresita! my Teresita!"

TRUE.

MY name is Hunt. Yes, sir; Anthony Hunt. I am a settler and drover on this Western prairie. Wilds? Yes, sir, it's little else than wilds now, but you should have seen it when I and my wife first moved up here. There was not a house within sight for miles. Even now we have not many neighbours: but those we have are downright good ones. To appreciate your neighbours as you ought, sir, you must just live in these lonely places, so far removed from the haunts of man.

What I am about to tell of happened ten years ago. I was going to the distant town, or settlement, to sell some fifty head of cattle—fine creatures, sir, as ever you saw. The journey was a more rare event with me then than it is now; and my wife had always plenty of commissions to charge me with in the shape of dry goods and groceries, and such-like things.

Our youngest child was a sweet little gentle thing, who had been named after her aunt, Dorothy. We called the child Dolly. This time my commissions included one for her—a doll. She had never had a real doll; that is, a bought doll; only the rag bundles her mother made for her. For some days before my departure the child could talk of nothing else—or we, either, for the matter of that—for she was a great pet, the darling of us all. It was to be a big, big doll, with golden hair and blue eyes. I shall never forget the child's words the morning I was starting, as she ran after me to the gate, or the pretty picture she made. There are some children sweeter and prettier than others, sir, as you can't but have noticed, and Dolly was one.

"A very great big doll, please, daddy," she called out after me. "And please bring it very soon."

I turned to nod a Yes to her, as she stood in her clean whitey-brown pinafore against the gate, her nut-brown hair falling in curls about her neck, and the light breeze stirring them.

"A brave doll," I answered, "for my little one. Almost as big as Dolly."

Nobody would believe, I daresay, how full my thoughts were of that promised doll, as I rode along, or what a nice one I meant to buy. It was not often I spent money in what my good thrifty wife would have called waste: but Dolly was Dolly, and I meant to do it now.

The cattle sold, I went about my purchases, and soon had no end of parcels to be packed in the saddle-bags. Tea, sugar, rice, candles—but I need not weary you, sir, with telling of them, together with the calico for shirts and nightgowns, and the delaine for the

children's new frocks. Last of all, I went about the doll—and found a beauty. It was not as big as Dolly, or half as big; but it had flaxen curls and sky-blue eyes; and by dint of pulling a wire you could open or shut the eyes at will.

"Do it up carefully," I said to the storekeeper. "My little daughter would cry sadly if any harm came to it."

The day was pretty well ended before all my work was done; and just for a moment or two I hesitated whether I should not stay in the town and start for home in the morning. It would have been the more prudent course. But I thought of poor Dolly's anxiety to get her treasure, and of my own happiness in watching the rapture in her delighted eyes. So with my parcels packed in the best way they could be, I mounted my horse and started.

It was as good and steady a horse as you ever rode, sir; but night began to set in before I was well a mile away from the town; it seemed as if it were going to be an ugly night, too. Again the thought struck me—should I turn back and wait till morning? I had the price of the cattle, you see, sir, in my breast pocket; and robberies, aye, and murders also, were not quite unknown things on the prairie. But I had my brace of sure pistols with me, and decided to press onwards.

The night came on as dark as pitch, and part of the way my road would be pitch dark besides. But on that score I had no fear: I knew the road well, every inch of it: though I could not ride so fast as I should have done in the light. I was about six miles from home, I suppose, and I knew the time must be close upon midnight, when the storm which had been brewing broke. The thunder roared, the rain fell in torrents: the best I could do was to press onwards in it.

All at once, as I rode on, a cry startled me: a faint, wailing sound, like the cry of a child. Reining up, I sat still and listened. Had I been mistaken? No, there it was again. But in what direction I could not tell. I couldn't see a thing; it was, as I have said, as dark as pitch. Getting off my horse, I felt about, but could find nothing. And while I was seeking, the cry came again: the faint moan of a child in pain. Then I began to wonder. I am not superstitious: but I asked myself how it was possible that a child could be out on the prairie at such an hour and in such a night. No: a real child it could not be.

Upon that, came another thought—one less welcome: was it a trap to hinder me on my way and ensnare me? There might be midnight robbers who would easily hear of my almost certain ride home that night and of the money I should have about me.

I don't think, sir, I am more timid than other people; not as much so, perhaps, as some: but I confess the idea made me uneasy. My best plan was to ride on as fast as I could, and get out of the mystery into safe quarters. Just here was about the darkest bit of road in all the route. Mounting my horse, I was about to urge him on, when

the cry came again. It *did* sound like a child's; the plaintive wail of a child nearly exhausted.

"God guide me!" I said, undecided what to do. And as I sat another moment listening, I once more heard the cry, fainter and more faint. I threw myself off my horse, with an exclamation.

"Be it ghost, or be it robber, Anthony Hunt is not one to abandon a child to die without trying to save it."

But how was I to save it?—how find it? The more I searched about, the less could my hands light on anything, save the sloppy earth. The voice had quite ceased now, so I had no guide from that. While I stood trying to peer into the darkness, all my ears alert, a flood of sheet lightning suddenly illumined the plain. At a little distance, just beyond a kind of ridge or gentle hill, I caught a glimpse of something white. It was dark again in a moment, but I made my way with unerring instinct. Sure enough, there lay a poor little child. Whether boy or girl I could not tell. It seemed to be three parts insensible now, as I took it up, dripping with wet, from the sloppy earth.

"My poor little thing!" I said, as I hushed it to me. "We'll go and find mammy. You are all safe now."

And in answer, the child just put out its feeble hand, moaned once, and nestled close to me.

With the child hushed to my breast, I rode on. Its perfect silence soon showed me that it slept. And, sir, I thanked God that He had let me save it, and I thought how grateful some poor mother would be! But I was full of wonder, for all that, wondering what extraordinary fate had taken any young child to that solitary spot.

Getting in sight of home, I saw all the windows alight. Deborah had done it for me, I thought—to guide me home in safety through the darkness. But presently I knew that something must be the matter, for the very few neighbours we had were collected there. My heart stood still with fear. I thought of some calamity to one or other of the children. I had saved a like one from perishing; but what might not have happened to my own?

Hardly daring to lift the latch, while my poor tired horse stood still and mute outside, I went slowly in, the child in my arms covered over with the flap of my long coat. My wife was weeping bitterly.

"What's amiss?" I asked in a faint voice. And it seemed that a whole chorus of voices answered me.

"Dolly's lost."

Dolly lost! Just for a moment my heart turned sick. Then some instinct, like a ray of light and hope, seized upon me. Pulling the coat off the face of the child I held, I lifted the little sleeping thing to the light, and saw Dolly!

Yes, sir. The child I had saved was no other than my own—my little Dolly. And I knew that God's good angels had guided me to save her, and that the first flash of the summer lightning had shone

just at the right moment to show me where she lay. It was her white sun bonnet that had caught my eye. My darling it was, and no other, that I had picked up on the drenched road.

Dolly, anxious for her doll, had wandered out unseen to meet me in the afternoon. For some hours she was not missed. It chanced that my two elder girls had gone over to our nearest neighbour's, and my wife, missing the child just afterwards, took it for granted she was with them. The little one had come on and on, until night and the storm overtook her, when she fell down frightened and utterly exhausted. I thanked Heaven aloud before them all, sir; as I said that none but God and His holy angels had guided me to her. It's not much of a story to listen to, sir; I am aware of that. But I often think of it in the long nights, lying awake: and I ask myself how I could bear to live on now, had I run away from the poor little cry in the road, hardly louder than a squirrel's chirp, and left my child to die.

Yes, sir, you are right; that's Dolly out yonder with her mother, picking fruit: the little trim light figure in pink—with just the same sort of white sun bonnet on her head that she wore that night ten years ago. She is a girl that was worth saving, sir, though I say it: and God knows that as long as my life lasts I shall be thankful that I came on home that night, instead of staying in the town.

"LET NO FLOWER OF THE SPRING PASS BY US."

So the "ungodly" saith, for "life is short,"
And fleeth as a cloud doth flee away.
Fool! heedst thou not that e'en the cloud is fraught
With treasure that shall never meet decay?
It melts beneath the sun but to obey
That law of blessing by which all is wrought
Of good and gracious. You will suffer naught
Of joy to pass unplucked while it is May?
Well, "crown [*yourself*] with rose-buds;" only know
They shall corrupt to poison round your head:
The man who lives but to himself alone
Is little better than the man laid dead:
Who lights all Heav'n with glory from His Throne
Wore grief's sharp wreath of thorns on earth below.

EMMA RHODES.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER X.

HOW MARTIN AND JOEL MADE A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

IT was not exactly "the first mild day in March," with that brisk north-east wind blowing across hill and moorland, and buffeting the tops of the leafless trees, like a false friend in the day of adversity. Full of pranks, sometimes of mischief, it was, nevertheless, a wind with one redeeming quality—it had driven off the grey mist that had been crouching over the face of the country for some time, and unveiled the beauty of a deep blue sky, such as Devon folks flatter themselves is almost equal to that of Italy. The hedgerows had begun to lose their wintry dulness of tint; a first delicate change of colour had come; and the larks, soaring in full song overhead, were bearing their glad testimony to the fact that bright days were at hand, though dark ones might still be in store. And as the sweet notes rose and fell, the chimes from the village church tower took up the strain, and repeated with tenfold earnestness both promise and warning. The brightness and the gladness were certain, and were drawing near, but sorrow must be dealt with first.

So, at least, it seemed to the ear of a listener over whose head many seasons had rolled, whitening her hair, and withering her frame, but leaving the brave spirit still young in faith and courage.

A lady of seventy-nine, active and independent as when thirty years younger, was driving a little pony carriage along a deep Devonshire lane, every now and then turning her eyes in tender solicitude on the companion by her side—a slight girl of twelve, with a long pale face, on which the scowl of a fretful temper was but too

visible, though partly owing to physical depression. Wrapped up in cloaks and furs almost to the eyes, she only spoke to complain of the cold and urge her grandmother to make Punch trot faster. The wind was horrid—she wished she had not come.

"My dear child," was the patient reply at last, "I told you I thought it a risk, but you were sure you should like it if you were well wrapped up."

"I liked it better than staying at home, that was all. There was nothing else I cared to do."

"Well, dear, we shall soon be there now. Keep your cloak well round your throat when we turn the corner. The bell is beginning to fall; we are only just in time."

They turned out of the lane, as she spoke, into the picturesque village of Level Bridge, with its church half hidden in summer among the trees, that waved over cross and headstone and nameless mound. It was distinctly visible now, its cool grey tint and sharp outline thrown up on a background of blue sky—one of those graceful relics of the past which it is the privilege of the present to rescue from disfigurement and decay. Porch, tower, and chancel had all been repaired or restored since the present rector had accepted the living; and all it now wanted was a larger congregation. On Sundays, indeed, improvement was visible already; but on the present occasion it was but too evident that the solemn service of humiliation for sin was to be left to a few women and children. It was a state of things to which the rector could not, as yet, get accustomed, being himself a canon of a cathedral renowned for its music and for the largeness of its congregations; and though the health of those dearest to him, as well as his own, had already benefited largely by the change, there were times when he longed for the sterner climate and the more earnest race of listening men.

Whatever help, sympathy, and regular attendance could give him was given by Mrs. Salisbury, whose black bonnet was as essentially a part of the congregation as the white head of Will Barton, the oldest inhabitant of Level Bridge. To-day she was the means of adding two to the assembly who would certainly not else have been there.

So methodical were all her habits that when she drove up to the lych-gate as usual she could hardly believe her own eyes, because they did not see the wrinkled face of her old man-servant, who was always waiting to hand them out and take charge of the pony. Such a want of punctuality on the part of old Richard was quite unprecedented, and the pony seemed to think it required some protest: instead of drawing up to the gate cleverly, it backed in a rebellious fashion towards the ditch. The young lady screamed, and the elder tried coaxing and threatening: but to no purpose.

"I cannot think where Richard can be—he never failed me before. Don't be frightened; it is only Punch's fun, but he ought tot ime his

jokes better, and not disgrace us like this at the church door. Be quiet, Punch! My dear child, keep still and you will be safe—if you attempt to get out you will hurt yourself—some one will come and help us in a minute or two."

But her grand-daughter, as wilful as the pony, heeded no warning; she pushed away her warm wrappings, and, in defiance of command and entreaty, tried to jump out just as Punch made a bolt forwards. Of course she received a jerk that would have flung her on her face in the road but for the promptitude of a passer-by. It was no other than Joel Treherne: who was just in time to catch her in his powerful arms.

"That was a near thing, miss," he said, as he set her on her feet, though without relinquishing his hold of her trembling frame. "Never you go to jump out of a carriage when it's moving. The worst you can meet with by sitting still will be less than the best you'll get by tumbling out."

Miss Myra, who had intended bursting into tears, to revenge herself on her grandmother for being in the right, was so surprised by this advice that she quite changed her mind, and looked up in her tall deliverer's face with a mixture of amusement and curiosity.

"I don't know who you are, but I am Miss Strahan; and that is my grandmamma, Mrs. Salisbury. Who is that holding the pony? And who are you?"

Before any answer could be returned, Mrs. Salisbury had profited by Martin's assistance to descend, and hastened to her darling, hardly able to believe she was safe.

"You will be the death of me some day, my child; I thought you were being killed almost under my very eyes. God bless you, sir," she added, with dignified simplicity, to Joel; "you have saved an old woman's heart as well as a little maid's bones; but I have no time to thank you now as I ought. You are coming into church, of course, and there is not a minute to spare. After the service I shall beg the favour of your name—and yours too, sir," with a courteous bow to Martin, still holding the pony's head; "and if in any way I can serve you in return, it will be a pleasure to do so. Here comes my good old servant. It would have been a bitter Ash Wednesday to him if anything had happened to either of us."

As she spoke Richard came limping up, very red in the face, very much out of breath, and exceedingly angry with his mistress. It was all her fault, he was certain; she didn't ought to have took Punch such a pace, with the roads like hammered iron. He had never been served so before—never! and if Punch's legs were of no value, an old man's might be considered; but the world was the same all the world over—when you'd done your work, you might just break your back, if you liked—nobody would care.

"But, Richard, we did not drive fast—not too fast," argued his mistress, with a meekness that amused Joel immensely. "Miss

Strahan felt cold, and was a little impatient, perhaps—but you are generally here first. Come, come," she added, good-humouredly, "no harm has been done, thanks to these gentlemen, so put up Punch, and follow us in as soon as you can. And you, gentlemen, as you are strangers, had better come with me. I will see that you are shown into seats."

She walked through the churchyard, with her grand-daughter on her arm, erect and stately as if at the head of a train of attendants, and so entirely ignoring the possibility of any hesitation on the part of the two strangers that Joel, though with rather a sheepish air, followed her as a matter of course. Martin was undecided, but, not choosing to be parted from his companion, did the same. Their entrance caused a momentary stir, as Mrs. Salisbury passed to her own seat after showing Martin and Joel theirs.

The good canon, as he noted the sunburnt visages so unexpectedly added to his congregation, felt a degree of satisfaction that was by no means shared by those who gave it. To Joel's dismay, he soon perceived that his companion was in a state of suppressed excitement, betrayed by the erect head, the quivering nostril, and the restless eye glancing over the sacred building, and marking down everything within its range with that indescribable look of a caged animal which he sometimes wore when fretted by restraint. That the half-tamed Australian hunter had not been brought up in church-going habits, Joel had long understood, but what could excite him in so quiet a place as this.

Martin gave him a reassuring sign, and then seemed to compel himself to be still; and Joel, relieved from his anxiety, found his own thoughts carried away by the tide of associations brought up by the old familiar words: it was so long since he had been in a village church, it seemed to take him back—ah, a good many years now. Aye, and how long was it since that Sunday in India when he and his two chums, one, like himself, from Looe, the other from Somersetshire, stood side by side in the hollow square while the chaplain read the service—and both those dear chaps were dead of cholera before church parade came round again? What made him think of them now? He could not tell; but he did just remember that it was a close shave for himself, and that the doctor said his pulling through was next door to a miracle.

When the canon's sonorous voice, rolling through the church, uttered the first of those solemn denunciations which belong to the special service of the day, Martin gave a violent start as if some one had struck him a blow. Recovering himself, however, the next moment, he leaned forward on the seat, so as to hide his face in his arms, and in that attitude remained till the last Amen had been chanted by the innocent lips around him. When he raised his head Joel saw that he was unusually pale.

The fact that some hidden chord had been touched to which that

reserved nature had vibrated in response, almost against its will, only endeared him the more to his comrade, though he would not have questioned Martin on the subject for the world. Intimate as they were, Joel always felt an intuitive respect for his friend, the Ironhand, which deterred him from any uninvited familiarity.

"I'll tell the Captain when we get back, and maybe he'll get to the bottom of it all," was his final decision, as they left the church, closely watched by the vigilant Mrs. Salisbury. Whatever their intentions might have been, they were soon aware that their time was not to be at their own disposal, for Miss Myra was in such a hurry to speak to them she would not give her grandmother time for half the friendly greetings usually exchanged at the church door. Before Mrs. Salisbury could frame the civil question that was to make them better acquainted, the young lady broke the ice by bluntly asking Joel who he was and where he came from, because grandmamma wanted to know. Martin relieved the old lady's feelings at once by answering, with a respectful bow, that they were the servants of a gentleman of the name of Bruce, come down to look at a house, which he had seen advertised to be let.

"There are not many here to choose from," said Mrs. Salisbury. "I only know of one. Do you mean Lowlevels?"

"That is the name, madam."

"Have you seen it yet?"

Martin explained that they had only arrived the night before, and the house could not be seen without an order, which, as yet, they had not had time to obtain.

"You have been better employed," said she, smiling kindly, as the real facts of the case showed themselves to her mind; "but if I have detained you, as I think I have, I can make you a small amends. The gentleman to whom Lowlevels belongs is our medical man; and he is so busy going his rounds that you may have some hours to wait, unless you will walk up to my house and take some refreshment there. He is to call at Highlevels at two, and your business can then be settled in five minutes."

Before Martin could reply, the young lady, who had been cross-questioning Joel, broke in with an exclamation of delight.

"Grandmamma, they are come from the gold diggings—they have dug for gold themselves, and found it too! They must tell me all about it! I want to know if there is any gold in our garden. I don't care about the flowers and things a bit, if we can only find some gold. You would not mind digging a little for me first—just to try—would you?" said she, coaxingly, to Joel.

"Why, no, miss, if it would please you: but you won't find any gold in these parts, I'm afraid."

"Have you ever dug here?"

"I can't say that I ever did."

"Then how can you tell? No, grandmamma, I shall not go home

till I know all about it; and he says he won't mind digging a little to show me how."

"Then you must show him the way to your garden," said Mrs. Salisbury, perseveringly wrapping up her wilful charge, and leading her perforce to the carriage. Martin involuntarily stepped forward to assist in handing her in, and was about to offer a similar service to the elder lady, but she thanked him and said she intended to walk. "I am rather cold, and it will warm me. Go straight home with Miss Strahan, Richard; I daresay these gentlemen will not object to take care of me."

Richard, privately rejoicing, but still wearing an injured exterior, probably from motives of policy, drove off much faster than his mistress would have thought of doing; and the latter turned to Martin with a smile he could not find it in his heart to resist.

"That grandchild of mine is a great sufferer in health and nerves; any object of interest that takes her out of herself for a little while is a boon. I am sure you will not refuse to gratify her curiosity."

"Anything in our power——" Martin began.

"Thank you; then if you will kindly accompany me I will take you the shortest way."

Martin made an almost imperceptible gesture of reluctance, but submitted; something in her voice and manner seemed to have a peculiar effect on his reserve or pride—whichever might be the quality that caused him to shrink from all advances in general. He exchanged a glance with Joel, and they followed the lady without further demur.

"I am very much obliged to you," she began, as they were cross ing a field by means of a raised paved path in the middle; "that child is a very dear charge, and it is difficult sometimes to keep her amused without excitement. You mentioned the name of Bruce—is your master a young man?"

"Rather younger than I am," said Martin.

"You are not very venerable yourself. May I ask if you were long in Australia?"

"Ever since I was a child."

"Indeed? You must almost look upon it as your native country. Did your family settle there?"

"My father passed many years in the bush," said Martin, "and I was brought up in it."

Joel listened with interest; even the voice of the Ironhand sounded gentler than usual under the spell of the lady's presence.

When Mrs. Salisbury spoke again, it was to point out a lane which led to Lowlevels, asking at the same time if Mr. Bruce were married. Martin replied in the negative.

"I am glad to hear it, if he seriously means to take that house."

"Is it not fit for a lady to live in, madam? Or is the situation unhealthy?"

"The situation, though low, is lovely. And the house is well drained, and desirable in every respect that we can discover."

"I understand you, madam; you are referring to the strange story Mr. Forrest told my master."

"Since your master has heard it, I need give him no warning," she replied, gravely; "but though, for my friend Dr. Nelson's sake, as well as for my own, I should be glad to see that house well tenanted, I cannot forget what I saw with my own eyes—a fair and innocent creature terrified to death—so deeply terrified that death became a mercy. This is no exaggeration of mine—it is a fact too well known here to be forgotten."

"And no one ever found out who did it—or why it was done?"

"No—there were many endless conjectures; but nothing was ever discovered. If your master takes the house he will be on his guard against trick or deception. I am inclined to believe that, however mysterious the first alarms may have been, some of the later ones could have been accounted for without much difficulty."

They had now reached a little gate leading into a wood, through which she admitted them by a private key, locking it again behind her. "This is my favourite pathway," she explained, "and you are now on Highlevels property. The estate was my mother's, and seems doomed to go in the female line, for I have no direct heir but my daughter's child, whose health has often made it doubtful whether she will live to succeed me."

They could not help noticing how beautifully everything was kept in order; and Joel made more than one exclamation of pleasure at the sight of the splendid trees. She smiled as she owned her own pride in her timber: but did not think it needful to explain how much she had gone through to save it from destruction.

"It must all appear very insignificant to your eyes after the Australian woods," she observed. "But the Level deserves to be well spoken of, nevertheless—its banks are lovely in summer, and the fishing is very good, both here and at Lowlevels. That may be an inducement to Mr. Bruce, as it was to Dr. Nelson."

They were crossing a rustic bridge over the stream as she spoke, and the path becoming much narrower, all conversation was stopped till, on turning an angle, they arrived in sight of the house—a rather heavy building, with a pillared portico, before which a gig was waiting in the charge of a servant. Observing that Dr. Nelson was before his time, Mrs. Salisbury began hurrying forwards, but after taking a few rapid steps stopped suddenly, pressing her hand to her heart. The two men looked at each other in alarm.

"You are in pain—you are ill," said Martin. "What can we do for you?"

She made a faint attempt to smile. "Give me your arm—only for a moment. I shall be better directly."

He gave the support she required, and a strange emotion of

tenderness thrilled his iron frame as he felt the convulsive shuddering of hers. Joel had run back to fetch some water from the stream, supposing her to be faint; but before he could return, the spasm had passed, and she was able to move on—feebly at first, but with a resolution that stood in the place of strength.

"Thank you," she said to Martin, "it is over—do not mention it in the house—it was my own fault—I ought not to have walked so far in this wind. It was well for me I had your strong arm to hold by—I would rather have it for my friend than my enemy."

"You are not fit to walk alone yet—won't you let me take you to the door?" asked Martin, entreatingly. The demure politeness of the confidential servant was quite laid aside, and the quick-witted lady did not fail to mark the change.

"Indeed, sir," she said, with earnest kindness, "I would, and gratefully, for I feel very tired; but it might alarm my grand-daughter—knowing, as she does, that I am always independent of support. It is many years now since I had a son's arm at my service—and I have learned to walk alone. Perhaps you know what that means."

"I ought to," said Martin, "for I have none—and they would not own me if I had. I beg your pardon," recollecting himself, and drawing back. "I had better wait for my fellow-servant."

"As you please," said she, smiling; "only keep my secret, and follow me as soon as you can."

She passed on with a bow. He stood watching her till she disappeared in the portico, just as Joel came up with his indiarubber goblet full of water.

"What? she is recovered already? I needn't have taken so much trouble. I say, Ironhand, what is the matter? You look as if you were in a dream."

"I am in a dream," said Martin, "and I am not sure that I care to wake, Joel," he added, as they walked on. "Do you know what I was thinking of in that church? I saw you look at me pretty hard."

"Thinking of? Well, to tell you the truth, you seemed to be thinking how soon you could get away."

"I was thinking—only it seemed like a dream—that I had been there before."

"Is it likely?"

"About as likely as that I ever met that noble-looking old lady. And yet, do you know, her voice, her manner, her touch on my arm—what a fool I am to talk like this! I told you I was dreaming. There, some one is beckoning us to make haste. Let us see how soon we can come to a deal with the doctor."

Mrs. Salisbury had lost no time in preparing for the reception of her guests, and they were at once ushered by Richard into the library, where refreshments were hospitably pressed on them. Joel's military training made him always ready to play his part on such occasions; but Martin, who might have boasted a still severer

apprenticeship, seemed disinclined to accept the proffered courtesy, and, after tasting a morsel or two, resisted all further pressing. The room itself attracted him much more than the collation; the carved walnut bookcases and chests, the heavily-bound books, the old weapons and curiosities hanging up on nails, or standing on brackets, were all vigilantly scanned, partly from a dawning conviction of ignorance respecting the world into which he had come, and which was so unlike the one he knew so well. In less time than might have been expected the door opened, and Mrs. Salisbury entered the library.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW GOLD WAS FOUND IN AN ORCHARD.

HAVING dismissed Richard to his own regions, Mrs. Salisbury turned with due courtesy to her guests, apologised for giving them, as she said, only Lenten entertainment, and for interrupting them so soon, but Dr. Nelson's time was precious, and he could only spare a quarter of an hour. The doctor himself came in as she spoke; a fair, slight young man, with rather a worn expression, as if the spring of his youth had been too early taken out of him. There was a quick, nervous brevity in the manner in which he spoke about his house that betrayed what it had cost him, though he could not touch on that point before strangers. He said he had been informed by a mutual friend that Mr. Bruce wished to see it, and he would give Martin an order of admission with pleasure.

"Of course," he said, looking up from his writing, "you have heard some of the reports about it?"

"This lady told us something about them," said Martin, coolly, "but that will all be considered in the agreement."

"Understand this, then, before we go on. I am not responsible for anything that may be seen or heard on the premises. People have gone in with their minds in a state of expectation, and in more than one instance frightened themselves by their own folly, and then attacked me. If your master takes the house, he must do it with his eyes open."

"And his ears too," said Martin. "We are used to that sort of encampment, Joel, I think?"

"Aye, aye," said Joel, who began not quite to like the prospect before him. "But then we always knew we had flesh and blood to deal with."

"No matter what the substance may be, we'll deal with it if it cross our way," said Martin. "The question is how soon we may take possession, for Mr. Bruce wants a house directly."

"The sooner the better," returned Dr. Nelson. "When you have seen it, and made your report, I will have an agreement drawn up,

and then you have only to please yourselves about going in. I do not live there myself—it is kept for me by a man and his wife."

"On whom you can depend?"

"I answer for nobody. It will be better for all concerned if Mr. Bruce only takes the house as it is for a year at first. Then, if he finds he is not annoyed as others have been, he can have the lease, which I hold for five and twenty years; and if he is annoyed, he can give it up on a quarter's notice."

"One thing must be settled first. Supposing my master to be annoyed, as you say, there will be no objection to his taking measures to prevent the annoyance? He may put up fastenings, or shut up communications, I suppose—and examine the premises thoroughly?"

"He may do what he pleases in that respect. If he only finds a trace of the villains who did the wrong"—the fair, haggard face worked convulsively as the words were uttered—"there is nothing I will not do to serve him."

His lips quivered so that he could hardly speak, but he handed the written order to Martin, and had taken up his hat to depart, when Myra burst open the door with a passionate exclamation: "I must, and I will, Bilson!" evidently addressed to a remonstrating maid in the background.

"I must and will come in!" she repeated, and went directly up to Joel. "You said you would show me how to dig for gold, and I was to show you the garden. Do come now—I've got to write to papa to-day, and it will be so nice to tell him we have been looking for gold. He never gives me anything else, because I like it so."

"Most people do, Miss," said Joel: "only they don't always get it."

"Grandmamma doesn't care for it; she likes to give it away, and I don't. But there is one thing better still, and she has got that, and I'm to have it some day—shall I tell you what that is?"

"Myra!"

Her grandmother's voice sounded alarmingly stern: Myra hung her head, and began to pout. The doctor looked at Mrs. Salisbury, and observed that he wished he knew where gold could be found without going so far for it as he had to do every day.

"If you come upon any, let me know, Myra, and save me a claim. I'll pitch a tent in the middle of the geranium bed."

Myra's face cleared directly. "Oh, what fun! so you shall. We'll go and begin at once; I know where the gardener keeps his spade—do come along—please do!" she added to Joel, who looked at Martin in some perplexity. The latter had been watching the faces all round him, and began to understand the case.

"Suppose we both go," he said, "and see who can find gold first."

Myra gave a shriek of joy, and took his hand. He held hers for a moment, looking wistfully at the small thin fingers, such a

contrast to his own. Raising his eyes to Mrs. Salisbury's, he saw that she was watching him through her tears. Joel saw it too, and a significant glance passed between the two friends.

"All right," said Joel; "you and the young lady go on and find the place, and I'll soon show her how the digging is to be done."

They sallied forth accordingly; Miss Strahan's maid, Bilson, joining them by her mistress's order, terribly scandalised by the nature of the job which they were supposed to be going to do. It was no fault of hers, she assured Treherne in confidence, if Miss Strahan was spoilt—her grandmamma just gave her her own way in everything for fear of making her ill, and if once a fancy got into her head, there was no peace till it had had its course. "Her own papa, Sir Jesse, takes precious good care not to be troubled with her," added Bilson. "He is glad enough to leave her on our hands, and thinks money will pay for the worry—but it don't. I've heard some say, that they're not surprised at a child of his being afflicted, considering things he is said to have done; but if it's a judgment on him, it's hard that other people should have to bear it."

Her murmurs were stopped, to Joel's relief, by a call from her young mistress to fetch the spade. He relieved her of the task, striding on in advance with the heavy implement on his shoulder. Myra, meanwhile, charmed with Mr. Martin's stories and descriptions, was in the highest spirits, and ready to agree to all he proposed; acquiescing in his argument that garden mould was not suitable for their object, and quite satisfied to let the first experiment be made in the little orchard, one side of which was bounded by a running stream.

"Now, Treherne, off with your coat, and show us how a Cornishman works when he pays his own wages."

"Stand clear, then," said Joel, good-naturedly.

He pulled off his coat, and in a few minutes had stripped the turf from a piece of the ground, and excavated a hole two or three feet wide, and about two feet deep. Myra looked on with great interest, and presently begged to be allowed to try—it looked so nice and easy. A faint remonstrance from Bilson only making her more determined, Joel put the spade into her hand, and Martin helped her to place her foot, and between them she nearly went into the hole head foremost, but was held back just in time.

"Do you see anything?" asked Martin.

"Yes, I do—that stone there—what is it?"

"Hand it up, Joel—it really is something."

Joel brought up a spadeful of earth, and handed it to Myra as if it had been a waiter. She plunged her fingers into the middle, and clutched what she had called a stone, but which proved to be a tiny lump of metal.

"You've done it now, Miss Strahan," said Martin. "Never mind your dirty fingers—you'll not be the first, nor the last, that has had to wash them after such work."

"But what is this, really?"

"Really? Don't you know?"

"Indeed, I don't—I never saw anything like it."

"It is a nugget of gold. That is the state in which it is constantly found, as well as gold dust, at the diggings. And now you have done what I daresay no young lady of your size ever did before."

The child held the nugget in both hands, and looked at it again and again, with a kind of breathless awe.

"What is it worth?" she said, almost in a whisper.

"By the weight of it," said Martin, poising it on his palm, "I should say nearly three pounds."

"Three pounds for this tiny bit? Oh, dear!" She drew a long breath, and then said, very seriously, "If you please, I wish to go home."

"So you shall," said Joel, "and I'll fill in the hole."

She stopped short, and watched him as he shovelled back the earth and fitted the turf into its place.

"There, Miss," he said, when it was finished, "now you mind what I say. You've had a piece of luck that may never happen to you again, so don't you ever try any more—do you hear?"

"I won't, indeed," said she, still clasping her treasure, and so much impressed that she allowed Bilson to lead her away without a word. It never occurred to her to thank them, or to say good-bye. Her whole soul was wrapped up in her wonderful discovery: while Bilson resolved to privately consult the gardener as to the chance of finding more.

"Poor little soul," said Joel, looking compassionately after the small figure moving so thoughtfully away; "I'd much rather have dug up her garden for her, and shown her how to sow the seeds."

"At any rate, we've paid for our luncheon," said Martin; "so now let us make the best of our way out, and go after the doctor's house. I want to go back to London to-night."

"The Captain won't be expecting us."

"No, but I don't like his being there alone. They have not followed *us*, it seems, but you may depend upon it they don't lose sight of *him*. I wonder which is our shortest way to Lowlevels?"

Joel, who had moved a few steps in advance, stopped short, and pointed to the little stream. Following the finger, Martin's eyes at once detected a face, with a quantity of untidy hair falling over it, peering at them through the bracken which grew down to the water's edge. On being discovered, it was withdrawn; and when Martin reached the spot he found a man in a crouching attitude, deliberately sousing himself over head and ears. The dress and appearance of this individual were peculiarly uninviting. Everything he wore was dilapidated and looked as if it had belonged to somebody else; the general effect being one only too familiar—the foul, sodden, damaged livery of the hard master—Drink.

They stood watching him in silence; and he, though feigning indifference, was watching them. Joel was the first to speak.

"If I were you, mate, I'd go right in," he said; "a good wash all over would be a pleasant surprise."

The man shook back his wet locks, and wrung them in his hand. "Cools one," he muttered, as he came stumbling up the bank, and looked first at one, and then at the other, with a mixture of cringing and defiance, mumbling his words so that half his sentences were lost, and not a few of his syllables. "Weather so hot—ready to drop with the sun. Sixpence to drink your health, gentlemen; a working man, sir, no beggar—of respec'ble parents—keep the doctor's house—most respec'ble—ask him."

"To judge by their son, they must be," said Martin. "What are you doing here?"

"Work in the hedges and woods, sir—poor pay—hard work—no feeling for a poor man—nothing allowed but your meals—shabby—and calls herself a lady of good family. Don't tell me."

"Does Mrs. Salisbury employ you?"

"Yes, sir—no work to-day—great fast—go to church and curse your neighbours—we know all about it. No harm digging a little, just to keep you warm, sir, eh?" Joel's fingers tingled.

"Why, you talked of the heat of the sun just now. I was wondering where you contrived to get hot in this wind. Where are you going now?"

"To my parents, sir—respec'ble people — keep the doctor's house, Lowlevels.

"Going to Lowlevels, are you?" said Martin. "Which is the nearest way?"

The fellow put his hands in his ragged pockets, and tried to look extremely knowing.

"Show you for sixpence—if respec'ble."

"Show us then, and if you take us the shortest way you shall have a shilling. Are your feelings equal to understanding that?"

The man stood still a moment; then scrambled down the bank again, and gave his head another desperate plunge in the stream. Emerging from his second ablution very much out of breath, but clearer in his speech, he intimated that he was ready and in an improved state of mind; which showed itself, as he walked along, by a copious confession of his manifold errors, more especially in the matter of temperance. His mistress had done all she could to cure him—he was a great favourite of hers—and as it was impossible to keep him as an indoor servant, she found him work about the grounds sooner than give him up; he didn't know how it was, but he couldn't cure himself, he wished he could—and so he went on, and Martin was inclined to believe that this version of his case might possibly be correct, even to the boasted respectability of his parents. The language was such as a decent servant might use.

But with all this there was a sense of strong repugnance to his society, so lively in his own mind that he could not help thinking, if the parents at all resembled their offspring, Lowlevels would want a deal of airing before it was lived in.

Crossing fields and meadows, they reached a path down a little glen, at the foot of which was situated a low picturesque building of grey stone, partly covered with ivy, with the Level running through its garden, spanned by a wooden bridge. The guide opened a gate leading into the garden; which to Joel's eye looked somewhat neglected, even for the time of year, and leaving them at the front entrance, went round to the offices in search of his mother.

"I tell you what, Treherne," said Martin, "if that is a specimen of your cider-drinkers, the more gold we find in the orchards the better."

"What a tongue the fellow has! He would make me suspect every living soul belonging to him. Mark my words: his respectable parents don't want to let the house—and he knows it."

"We shall soon see if you are right. What a place this must be in summer! Good fishing too, no doubt, in that river."

"I've often heard of the Level trout," said Joel, "and I'll be bound our ill-used friend knows their flavour. Here is some one coming at last. I hope they haven't hurried themselves."

The front door was opened by an old woman, tidily dressed, who, on being shown the order, admitted them with a curtsey, and expressed great satisfaction at being thus applied to. She was beginning to fear nobody ever would take the house, and it was almost too much for her and her good man to live there through the winter, only their great regard for Dr. Nelson induced them to stop.

Here her husband, who had followed, interrupted her sharply with the remark that the gentlemen didn't want to hear her talk; a sentiment they were disposed to applaud to the echo. She took the hint, and began opening doors and unbarring shutters with promising alacrity. Dining-room, drawing-room, small room for odds and ends (the doctor used it as a surgery), good bedroom, with lovely view up the valley—another looking on the glen—furniture very little used—carpets, curtains, all in good preservation. To try whether Joel's suspicions were correct, Martin began to speak of the reports he had heard, observing that of course he did not believe them.

"Ah, sir," with a heavy sigh, "we are but poor creatures, and there is no denying that when people get frightened they don't know what they say. And when they have complained, first of one thing, and then of another, I've always stood up for the house, and always will. The chimneys don't smoke much, if there ain't a high wind, and the rain only comes in in wet weather; and as to rats, and bad drains, and a deal wanting to be done inside and out, as some says, why, it stands to reason a gentleman can't always have his hand in his pocket, and those things will happen in the best of houses. That's what I always say, and my husband will bear me witness."

"You'd better say nothing about it—you talk too much," was her husband's response. "What business is it of yours?"

"Well, I always do stand up for them I serve, and nobody can say I haven't served the doctor faithful—dusting and sweeping and keeping it all nice, against the house being took, and if people don't like to stay, it's no fault of mine. When they hear moanings round the house on a windy night, and see shadows across the window, and find marks of feet where feet couldn't have been——"

"I understand," interrupted Martin, and he made a few notes in his pocket-book. "How much do you get for keeping the house in order? You may answer that question, I suppose?"

"A trifle a week, and a little coal and candle for the long winter nights. What's that, sir, for two people to live upon—and my son often ill as he is, and coming here to be nussed?"

"Oh, your son comes here when he is ill, does he? And what shall you do when the house is let?"

"Well, sir, if the family wants a good cook, as can have a first rate character, I'd be happy to serve them. And my husband here understands a garden: and my son too, for that matter."

"That would be a great advantage, certainly. Suppose we look at the garden."

As far as the pleasure-ground was concerned, the skill of the family made a poor show; the gravel walks were disfigured with moss and weeds, the turf had been allowed to grow coarse, the shrubs were wild and tangled; but when they reached the kitchen garden, it was quite a different matter. There were evident signs of industry and cultivation; early vegetables were in a forward state, and there was a goodly show of fruit trees on the south wall. Other tokens of domestic farming were also visible—two or three beehives, a rabbit-hutch, a snug little pig-sty, and some half-dozen Cochin China fowls.

While the family were turning Dr. Nelson's premises to such capital account, it was no wonder they remained without a tenant. Joel glanced at Martin: but the latter was more intent on the general aspect of the house and grounds than on the details, or the inhabitants. His keen eyes roamed everywhere, taking measurements and calculating distances; and before long it was clear that his doing so had attracted attention. The younger Medland, who had lounged out into the garden behind them, kept his bloodshot eyes fixed on Martin's movements with a kind of fearful admiration; and when Joel asked him if there were no apple trees, he started, and plucked his mother's sleeve.

"There's one or two, sir. What are you wanting now, Bob? You've had too much already to-day. Go in with you, do."

Bob shrank a few paces in the rear, but still remained on the watch.

"Do you never have your fruit and vegetables stolen?" asked Martin, abruptly.

"Dear heart," said Mrs. Medland, "who would steal from poor

folks like us? Why, there isn't one of 'em would dare climb our wall at night for fear ——"

"You just mind your own business," put in her lord. "We don't get robbed, that's enough. Unless," with a fierce side glance at his hopeful son, "by a drunken lazy dog who is always coming on us for money. You are looking at that wall, sir?" observing Martin's eye fixed on the house, which on that side was bare.

"I was noticing the thickness of the wall. Why, that room might be several feet wider by the look of the outside."

"Very true, sir; but they say it used to be a much larger building. Part of it was at one time in ruins; but they were pulled down, and the house patched up, as one may say. I've often wondered if the rest was safe, it do rock so in the wind."

The daylight was sinking behind the hills, and Martin, having ascertained that there was a carriage-road by which they could regain their inn, remunerated his guide, and departed with Joel.

"Now, Bob," said the old woman, while her husband was bolting and barring the gate, "what is it? I've got nothing to give you to-day, so it's no good your asking."

"I haven't asked you for anything; but as you wouldn't heed me when I touched you, I won't tell you now. Only you make up your mind to one thing—those chaps mean to come back."

"Well, what if they do? They won't be the first that have tried it. What foolish maggot have you got in your head?"

"You wait and see," was the answer; and nothing more could she induce him to say.

"Now, Treherne," said Martin, as they approached the inn, breaking a long silence, which his companion had carefully respected, "I give you notice that I am done up. This sort of thing is harder than a seventy miles gallop. I am going in for a quiet pipe, and when we have had some dinner we must get a trap and catch the night train. You'll see to all that."

"All right," said Joel, cheerfully.

The scenes and the atmosphere, the novelty of which so strangely oppressed his friend, were to him refreshingly homelike. When he had made the due arrangements for their departure, he was quite ready to chat with the friendly host and hostess; and with Cornish acuteness he so contrived the chatting that nearly all the information came from their side.

He learnt a great deal about Highlevels, and how "Madam," as Mrs. Salisbury was styled, had hard work to keep up appearances and make both ends meet, her income being partly swallowed up in paying off incumbrances. How no one but herself could manage as she did, always the lady, and yet spending so little on herself, and not allowing a stick on the premises to be wasted. How no love was lost between her and her son-in-law, Sir Jesse Strahan, though her care had saved his daughter from dying as all his other children did;

and how, as the servants all knew, let him send what he pleased for Miss Strahan, Madam never shared a crumb or drop—what Miss Strahan couldn't use was given away in her name. It was the same with everything in the house. All the money Sir Jesse paid was laid out on Miss Strahan's rooms, or dress, or education, and she had many things allowed her that Madam wouldn't have for herself. They did say that she was spoilt, poor young lady, and that Madam, who was sadly put out if young folks in the village didn't mind what was said to 'em, put up with a deal from her own grand-daughter, fearing to do her harm, for she was not quite like other girls. The doctor must be making a good thing of her case, he was there so often, and it was well for him he had that to fall back upon, for his house didn't stand him in much, sure-ly. Know the people who kept it? They rather thought they did: and how the doctor could be so blind, or so busy, as not to see *their* little game, was not to be understood. Why, the place was a fortune to those two old people: rent free, coal and candle allowed, the garden, the trout-stream, their poultry and their pigs—one thing and another, they must be making money by the hatful; and keeping him out of his by the stories they whispered about the house. Parcel of stuff about mysteries and noises! It was all very true about poor Mrs. Nelson—and *that* story had never been cleared up; but who wouldn't be skeary on a dark windy night, if they had been told that sights had been seen and sounds heard. When people are always expecting something, they fancy it, if it isn't there. However, the Medlands had their share of trouble, in spite of their cleverness, for that son of theirs was a constant thorn in their sides: and the question was how much longer Madam would go on bearing with him.

"It's wonderful," said the good hostess, warmly, "what patience she has had, and how much she has tried to do for the lads in this place. Some have turned out well—eh, Sam? You can tell us something of that. And some have just run counter to every good thing she taught them. There was Jack Cheveril, now—I wonder what's become of him."

"I did hear he had gone to Australia—that was some years ago," said the landlord. "He came of a bad lot, and he went the way of his breed."

Joel, interested, asked a question or two: which soon set the good woman reviving the almost forgotten story of how Madam—who was younger then, but always full of spirit—had been woke one night by some one trying to break open her jewel-drawer, and how she called him by his name, and ordered him to put everything down, and be off that minute—and, wonderful to relate, he obeyed her, and she saved her jewels.

"And you must know, sir, though we shouldn't talk of this to everybody, they were diamonds worth I don't know how much, collected by Madam's father, who had a great love for them. And

hard pushed as she has sometimes been for money, nothing will ever induce her to part with them. I think it is a sort of vow she once made that they shall go as they are to her children or their children; and there's only poor little Missy left, and whether she'll ever live to enjoy them, goodness only knows."

"And that robber, who didn't rob, you say, was Jack Cheveril?"

"Just so; and he run away that night, and never come back—leastways, one man saw him, years after, skulking about the grounds at Lowlevels, which was then under repair, and empty. But Jack Cheveril disappeared when spoken to, and no one ever heard of him afterwards."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW GABRIEL PLEADED HIS CAUSE.

"Is that you, Forrest?"

"No, my dear fellow; nothing half so grand. Something more like park scenery," said Hartley Carroll.

"Come in, then. You are just the same as ever."

"*You* are not. The man I was proud to call my friend would have known better than to get into such a mess as this—to say nothing of keeping innocent people waiting for dinner. What do you mean by it, Bruce?"

"Don't sit down on my bed, and I will tell you. Carroll, have you the remotest idea of the kind of life this good fellow leads?"

"What, old Davie? He is as good as gold—I know that; but his line is not much in my way. Edith knows more about him than I do."

"She has worked with him, and for him; I know that. I lie here thinking of it—fancying her moving about these streets and courts, showing them that all the sweetness of the world is not out of their reach; that it can come to them, even to their doors. When will it come to mine?"

"Don't excite yourself, dear fellow; suppose we try to understand each other with a little plain speaking. You know she is my sister."

"Yes, and that you are my old friend. You are not against me, Carroll, are you? You will give me hope?"

He stretched out his hand, which Hartley took in his own.

"My dear Bruce, if she cares for you, and you for her, I am not called upon to make things unpleasant. It is not for me to answer for Edith, especially as she has not yet heard from you; but my wife is below, and if you like to consult with her she may give us a hint what to do next."

"How good she is to come and see me! Pull the big chair this way—it is the only lounge in the house—kept for infirm patients—we won't tell her that. Clear the doctor's stuff from the table, and

throw that red blanket of mine across the bed. There—now we are more ship-shape, and a little less like a hospital ward."

Hartley found his wife in David Forrest's little parlour, lined with bookshelves and cupboards; the only ornaments a few choice photographs of sacred pictures, and some specimens of Ammergau wood-carving, the gifts of friends. The aspect from the windows was as dull as the windows themselves, the shadow of London overspreading everything, in spite of daily watchfulness and cleanly care. The housekeeper, Mrs. Honest, was standing talking to her, and both turned eagerly to hear Hartley's report of the patient.

"He is talking poetry to so awful an extent that the sooner some dull thing happens to him—marriage, we'll say—to rub off his romance, the safer it will be for the world. Did you ever have such a patient before, Mrs. Honest? Tiny," he continued, "come upstairs; that poor fellow wants to ask your advice."

She rose to comply, but lingered, gazing wistfully round the apartment and out of the dingy window-panes.

"I was never here before; I wonder what this kind of life can be? I should hate it, of course, for myself; but if one could be transformed for once, like the man who was caliph for a day, I should like to get an idea of what they see to make them go on."

"Suppose you adopt the style for six months, my dear? It would be a vast relief to my pocket."

"You are always thinking of your pocket."

"It is time some one did. Unless we take care it will not trouble anybody long. Strahan will never forgive us, Tiny. I could see that last night."

"I don't want his forgiveness. He never deserved her, and he will never have her now, and I am glad of it. I wish you had nothing to do with him."

It was curious, she thought, as she followed her husband up the uncarpeted staircase, for a rich woman, as she was supposed to be, that she should never know what it was to be in really easy circumstances. Whatever they did, it seemed to her, must always have some reference to their money matters. Was there anything gnawing at the root of their prosperity? any hidden enemy at work devouring their substance? She knew nothing of business, but she was sure Hartley was all right. They would sit in committee as soon as Edith's affairs were settled, and see if they could not manage better; and her sanguine temperament rose again as she imagined an easy retrenchment that would be no trouble to herself, and cost her nothing she cared about, only making a little agreeable change. Her face had regained its brightness when Gabriel saw it appear in the doorway, and his beamed a grateful welcome. Hartley put her by his bedside in the easy-chair, and perched himself behind her on one of the arms, looking at Gabriel over her bonnet.

"We have been very anxious about you," she began, rather

nervously, "but I hope you will soon be well enough to keep your appointment."

He smiled at the word. "Do you know what that appointment is?"

He spoke slowly, as if with an effort. She smiled in return, and put her hand kindly on his.

"How can I know what nobody has told me? Of course I am woman enough to try and guess; and guess wrong, very likely."

"Most likely," put in a voice over her head.

Gabriel caressed the small fingers, and kept them in his own.

"You must know, Mrs. Carroll. Have I any chance? Will you tell me to hope?"

"Will you tell me what it is you are hoping for? We must take nothing for granted."

"You do not know, then, that I had your father's consent if I returned with a fortune in five years?"

"Consent to what?"

"To my trying to win the object of my life—your sister Edith."

"Did you ever tell Edith this?"

"No: he made me promise to hold no communication with her till my return. I could only hope that somebody knew why I was silent. He never told you, or her? Well, I have no right to complain; only it is hard that, now I may speak, I am laid here like a log. My hand is not steady enough to write—what can I do?"

"You can trust your friends, and they will do what they can for you. Only no one can answer for Edith but herself, and she could not be expected to guess what she was not meant to know."

"She knows more than you think. Ask her"—his voice became the more touchingly earnest that his strength was beginning to fail—"ask her if she remembers the last evening I spent at your father's house. You were away, but Miss Ford was there, and she had been telling us of a friend of hers who had been working hard in a South American house of business for five years that he might save money enough to present his bride, on their wedding-day, with the object of her ambition—a superb set of diamonds. There were many remarks made on both parties, and one lady observed it was worth while to wait five years for such a gift. Your sister said—I hear her voice as I repeat it—'it was worth while to wait five years for such a man.' The thought flashed across me then—would she wait for me? I went to your father—told him my position exactly, and that I would sacrifice everything to the one task of making money, if he would give me five years to do it in. He was kind, but decided; her peace must not be disturbed, but if I chose to take my chance of finding her free on my return, and if I did return in five years with a competence, he would not object to my suit—nay, he would go farther—he would even approve it. I gave up the army and went to Sidney, where I have friends in business, and where I began

a course of disheartening struggles after fortune, which kept me on the grind for four years. With the fifth everything took a turn, and my success was something marvellous when once it began. Hartley shall see our accounts and judge for himself."

"And those few words from her were enough? You did not even ask what she felt for you?"

"I gave my word that I would neither speak nor write; only my friend Philip Forrest knew why I went, and I heard from him now and then, and it kept up my hope. Those words were always in my ears, but they bound her to nothing; I went at my own risk, and would have gone had it been ten years instead of five. If that knock on the head had been just a little harder, they and I should have ended our course together."

There was a short silence—on his part from weariness, on hers from emotion. Hartley touched her shoulder by way of warning, then arranged Gabriel's pillows, and handed him some lemonade.

"Come, Tiny," he said, "I don't know much about sick-rooms, but I feel pretty clear that we shall hear of it if we let him talk any more. You know enough to explain matters at home."

"I know enough to explain what has often puzzled us both," said Tiny, "the weight on Edith's spirits. If she guessed that you were gone on her account she has been reproaching herself for having sent you; and that, with her, means a great deal. She has a right to know the truth now, and I will take care she does at once—if she is well enough to listen. But the fact is," watching Gabriel's eager eyes and parted lips, "the news that came last night, when we had been expecting an old friend to dinner, rather upset her nerves. She quite frightened Alice Kerr by fainting away."

"God bless her! Is she better to-day?"

"Yes; I left her asleep on her sofa, with Alice keeping guard."

"Dear child! I owe her a great deal. Look—I have my picture safe. Forrest stuck it up there to cheer my eyes. He saw the likeness directly. Mrs. Carroll, remember, your sister must not be agitated—never mind me. You will let me know how she is—and it is only holding out a little bit longer."

"I will take care," said she, kindly, as she rose to go, "if you in turn will promise me to keep yourself calm and quiet—for her sake. Don't let me hear I have done you harm by coming."

"You have done me a world of good," he replied, "and I promise they shall all see it."

He pressed her hand to his lips, relinquished it with a smile, and turned his face to the wall. So still did he lie that Mrs. Honest came up at last to see what could be the matter.

"Well, Tiny, what do you think?" asked Hartley, as they drove home.

"Think? Why, if I were Edith, I should be afraid to marry him. He deserves a great deal too much."

Never had Edith Leicester understood what humiliation meant till she recovered from her fainting fit, and became aware how she had exposed the state of her feelings. Having been left to the care of her sister and friend, she had not to encounter the surprise or curiosity of the other eyes which had seen her weakness; but she knew they had seen it, and her sense of shame was almost overpowering. Neither Clare nor Alice let fall a word to imply that her agitation had been more than was natural; but she could look neither of them in the face, and was glad to be left alone in the dark to give her emotion free vent on her pillow.

In point of fact, her swoon was only the last stage of a long struggle with mental suffering, whose effects, now she had once given way, told on her strength. The night passed in alternations of feverish dreams and restless oppression, and morning found her with a miserable headache, resulting in giddiness and prostration. It was not till past the middle of the day that by resolute exertion she succeeded in dressing. But she was glad to lie down on her sofa immediately afterwards, and gradually sank into a profound sleep, which lasted several hours.

She awoke at last. The room wore an aspect of singular comfort and cheerfulness; the fire burned clearly; Nurse Ellis's little kettle was singing on the hob; the tea was set out on a small round table, and Clare and Alice were sitting, one in an arm-chair, the other on a stool, watching for her to wake. Their brightened faces attracted her notice directly. She tried to ask if there were any news, but her lips and throat were parched. Tiny rose and kissed her.

"He is going on as well as possible, dear—and I hope by this time he has had his tea, as we are going to have; and then I must do a very unpleasant thing for a person with a tolerable opinion of herself in general—confess myself to have been in the wrong. Hand her a cup, Alice, and don't look so precocious, child, when your elders are in a penitential mood, and acknowledging their little mistakes. I know what you have been about—sketching, at the expense of your eyes, you mercenary little thing."

"It is only a study," pleaded Alice. "I couldn't help it, as she ay there."

"That is all very fine, but if you are going to put her into a picture, please let it be as our friend Kunigund; and Hartley shall take you to the Zoological Gardens to study lions and tigers. Never mind about Delorges; we will find a model for him later."

Alice stole a glance at Edith, drank her cup of tea without replying, and went quietly out of the room. Mrs. Carroll nodded approvingly.

"That is a sensible little monkey, I must say. Well, my dear, you are waiting for my confession. It is rather hard upon me to have to make it—as hard as it is for you to spend Ash Wednesday on the sofa; but we can't pick and choose our own

penances, and mine is to own I made the awkward mistake of flattering myself I was more attractive than was the case. In short, I find I had no more to do with the expatriation of Gabriel Bruce than the man in the moon, or the Speaker of the House of Commons. Kunigund threw her glove among the kangaroos and dingoes, and he jumped in after it, and has brought it back full of Australian gold; and being of gentler temper than his prototype, he wants to lay it at her feet instead of throwing it in her face. Do you forgive my blunder?"

"You have been to see him—he has spoken to you?"

"Hartley and I have both been there, and we have both come to the same conclusion—that your happiness lies at your feet, and that you have only to stoop and pick it up. He is ordered to be kept cheerful; and you know best how that is to be done in David Forrest's peaceful hermitage, with bare walls and floor, and nothing to look at as he lies in bed."

"It all seems a dream to me," said Edith, whose tears were dropping fast. "Clare, you said you must confess to me—let me confess to you. When you told me *that*—that which you then believed—and I thought that after all I had been suffering these five years from a delusion, I cannot describe what I felt. I hardly knew what I said or what I did during the evening; but I do remember that I began to listen to Sir Jesse Strahan's civilities, and tried to think what life would be united to a man like that, whom I could not love and did not esteem. The pain it gave me was a sort of relief, as dulling the other, so much harder to bear. But I have been wondering since whether you observed—whether he could have thought——"

"That you were less distant than usual? We noticed that. I fancied you were doing it on Alice's account; but Sir Jesse looked more inclined to hope than he ever had before."

"I never meant to mislead him. If I did I must ask his forgiveness too. Forgiveness is all I can hope for now"—she smiled through her tears. "I thought last night that I might never hear it spoken—though I was sure I had seen it in Gabriel's face. Oh, how often I have repented of my hasty words—how I have prayed to be pardoned for selfishly stinging his generous nature to sacrifice his all to our dread of what the world calls poverty! It was my doing, you say—he told you so?"

"He told me all he had voice for," said Mrs. Carroll: and she repeated what Gabriel had said, and described his looks and the effect produced on herself, rightly judging that nothing would so effectually aid her sister's recovery. In her secret soul she had felt not a little injured at having been kept all this time in the dark, but she waived all thoughts of self, and devoted the next hour to cheering Edith with praise of Gabriel and bright pictures of their happy future. That he had been hardly dealt with, they must all admit and that he richly deserved the best reward they could give him.

"Only don't spoil him at first, Edith, by being too yielding, and treating him too much like a hero and martyr."

Edith only smiled; but the tender glow in her eyes betrayed that at that moment no claim would have appeared beyond his due. Her sister left her at last to muse over past and present, as she had not dared to do before, with thankful anticipations of the future. And when Alice ventured to peep in she saw Miss Leicester on her knees, with her face hidden in her hands.

"It looks as if she were trying to give him up, from a sense of duty, or something," thought Alice. "People don't think of saying their prayers when they have just got all they wish for. Ah, dear me! if the case were mine, no duty should stand in my way: and I don't see why it should in hers. I suppose I must be content as a sort of Nydia, looking on at Glaucus and Ione, and a ministering angel to each in turn—but it is not quite as pleasant as it looks."

Edith came down in the evening, looking pale and languid, but pronouncing herself much better, and by general consent no topic was introduced that was not cheerfully and hopefully handled. If Hartley and Clare had their misgivings they kept them back, not naming them even to themselves. Whether they would have done so had they realised the state of the case, we are not called upon to decide.

Certain it is, however, that Edith's night of distress was rest and peace compared with that passed by Sir Jesse Strahan, convinced, by the evidence of his own eyes, that in Gabriel Bruce he had a favoured, almost victorious, rival. He had said very little, but Hartley Carroll understood his reticence, and began from that moment making up his mind for the worst; and perhaps reckoning, half unconsciously, on being rescued by Gabriel's hard-won gold.

"If they marry soon, and Gabriel puts his money into our business, we shall do splendidly," he said to his wife; and though she shrank from hearing it said in words, she saw at once that it was their best chance of ridding themselves of an ally who might at any moment become a dangerous foe.

That the same thought should cross Sir Jesse's mind was only to be expected, and all night long his fertile brain was revolving schemes to appease his gnawing jealousy. He hardly knew how much he had hoped till he saw cause for despair. Accustomed through life to regard nothing as an obstacle that could either be overleaped or undermined, it is not surprising that he should begin now to cast about for an instrument such as he had found before. There was one nearer at hand than he supposed.

Sir Jesse's coffee and letters were brought to him at his usual early hour. He had skimmed the contents of most of the letters in a preoccupied way, before he perceived a handwriting to which he was never indifferent. An envelope of fashionable size and quality and a gilt monogram more intricate than graceful assorted somewhat lamely

with the childish, straggling letters of the address; but he was so accustomed to this, and to finding the contents of the weekly epistle in harmony with the penmanship, that the following communication was really a surprise.

"Highlevels, Ash Wednesday.

"My Dear Papa,—I am going to tell you something wonderful which will be a great surprise. I have been digging for gold in our orchard, and found a real nugget under an apple-tree!!! It must not be talked about, or people will be digging all the apple-trees up to see if they can find any more. I am the only young lady in all Devon who has found gold under an apple-tree. I will tell you how it was. I went to church with grandmamma and nearly tumbled out, and a tall man-servant caught me up, and his name is Joel Treherne. I like him very much—I wish he was my servant. He and the other man came to get Lowlevels for their master, Mr. Bruce, who has been digging for gold in Australia, and they showed me how, but I must not try again, or I may lose my good luck. I want you to see my nugget, that you may tell me how much it is worth. Perhaps Mr. Bruce will help us to find some more when he is at Lowlevels. Grandmamma sends her love.

"Your affectionate daughter,

"Myra Strahan.

"P.S.—Please send my coral charm if it is mended."

"Poor child—poor child!" he muttered to himself several times, as he turned to the beginning of the letter and read it through again. "Either she was dreaming, or that grandmother of hers is allowing her to keep nice company. Bruce's servants pretending to find gold! —impertinent, to say the least of it, if true. But what can have made Bruce fix on that particular house?"

He mused a little longer, and then rang the bell for his servant: who promptly appeared with the morning papers. Sir Jesse opened the *Times*, and stood looking at it with his back to the fire while Simmonds was removing the breakfast things.

"By the way, Simmonds," he said, when this operation was nearly completed, "you were telling me something yesterday which I had not time to attend to—something about that Australian servant of Mr. Bruce's, were you not?"

"Yes, Sir Jesse. I met with a person who had known him in Australia, and he told me several things about him, Sir Jesse."

"Is there anything against him?"

"Against the young man himself, sir? Oh, no—he was bred up in the bush, Jones said, and his father was a squatter, as they call them there; one of the poorer settlers, who just made ends meet. His son is a wonderful shot and rider—could break in any horse in the colony, I believe, sir. They used to call him the Ironhand, and to relate all kinds of adventures that he had been in."

"Then your friend Jones is a friend of his, I suppose?"

"Why, no, Sir Jesse. He gave me to understand that this Martin, and, indeed, his master too, had treated him very badly. I drew him on to talk, you see, sir, over his glass.

"What is he himself?"

"Well, sir, he seems a very handy fellow, can do almost anything; and I promised to try and find him work. He is clever at goldsmith's or jeweller's work, sir—I gave him a little job yesterday, and he has just brought it back. You wouldn't know the thing had ever been mended, Sir Jesse."

"I have a trinket here of Miss Strahan's that she wants to have mended. Could he do it, do you think?"

"I daresay he could, sir. Shall I give it to him?"

"Yes. No—send him up. I must explain it to himself."

Simmonds withdrew. He understood perfectly that his master had some private motive, but was too well bred to take notice.

In a few minutes he returned, ushered Mr. Jones into the apartment, and then went back to his own breakfast, a much more elaborate affair than that of his master. The latter took no notice of Jones at first, but went on reading his paper. Jones advanced quietly to the table, and stood there, in an attitude of respectful patience, waiting the great man's pleasure.

"Ah!" said Sir Jesse, at last, carelessly folding the *Times* together, and leaning his elbow on the chimney-piece; "you are a handy workman in jewellery, I hear."

"I have always given satisfaction, Sir Jesse. I shall be proud to be in your service again," was the reply, in a low steady voice, which startled the listener.

"Again? My good friend, I have not the honour of your acquaintance. Did you ever work for me before?"

"Yes, Sir Jesse—some years ago."

"How? When?"

"When I was employed by old Mr. Oram, Sir Jesse."

The rich contractor turned deadly pale. His hand clutched the marble on which his arm had been resting.

"Oram? Then your name is not—not Jones—you are——"

"I would rather be called Jones, at present, Sir Jesse; but to you I am not afraid to give my real name. I am Darch Williams."

(*To be continued.*)

HELEN'S CURATE.

A SUMMONS from Mr. Brandon meant a summons. And I don't think I should have dared to disobey one any more than I should those other summonses issued by courts of law. He was my guardian, and he let me know it.

But I was hardly pleased that the mandate should have come for me just this one particular day. We were at Crabb Cot: Helen, Anna, and William Whitney had come to it for a week's visit; and I did not care to lose a day with them. It had to be lost, however. Mr. Brandon had ordered me to be with him as early as possible in the morning: so that I must get off betimes to catch the first train.

It was a cold bleak day towards the end of February: sleet falling now and then, the east wind blowing like mad, and cutting me in two as I stood at the hall door. Nobody else was downstairs yet, and I had swallowed my breakfast standing.

Shutting the door after me, and making a rush down the walk between the evergreens for the gate, I ran against Lee, the Timberdale postman, who was coming in, with the letters, on his shaky legs. His face, shaded by its grey locks, straggling and scanty, had a queer kind of fear upon it.

"Mr. Johnny, I'm thankful to meet you; I was thinking what luck it would be if I could," said he, trembling. "Perhaps you will stand my friend, sir. Look here."

Of the two letters he handed to me, one was addressed to Mrs. Todhetley; the other to Helen Whitney. And this last had got its envelope pretty nearly burnt off. The letter inside could be opened by anybody, and some of the scorched writing lay exposed.

"If the young lady would but forgive me—and hush it up, Mr. Johnny!" he pleaded, his poor worn face taking a piteous hue. "The Miss Whitneys are both very nice, kind young ladies; and perhaps she will."

"How was it done, Lee?"

"Well, sir, I was lighting my pipe. It is a smart journey here, all the way from Timberdale—and I had to take the long round to-day instead of the Ravine, because there was a newspaper for the Stone House. The east wind was blowing right through me, Mr. Johnny; and I thought if I had a bit of a smoke I might get along better. And a spark must have fallen on the letter while I was lighting my pipe, and I did not see it till the letter was all aflame in my hand. If—if you could but stand my friend, sir, and—and perhaps give the letter to the young lady yourself, so that the Squire does not see it—and ask her to forgive me."

One could but pity him, poor worn man. Lee had had pecks of

trouble, and it had told upon him, making him old before his time. Now and then when it was a bad winter's morning, and the Squire caught sight of him, he would tell him to go into the kitchen and get a cup of hot coffee. Taking the two letters from him to do what I could, I carried them indoors.

Putting Helen's with its tindered cover into an envelope, I wrote a line in pencil, and slipped it in also. "Dear Helen,—Poor old Lee has had a mishap and burnt your letter in lighting his pipe. He wants you to forgive it and not to tell the Squire. No real damage is done, so please be kind.—J. L." Directing this to her, I sent it to her room by Hannah, and made a final start for the train.

And this was what happened afterwards.

Hannah took the letter to Helen, who was in the last stage of dressing, just putting the finishing ornamental touches to her hair. Staring at the state her letter was in, she read the few words I had written, and then went into a passion at what Lee had done. Helen Whitney was as good-hearted a girl as ever lived, but hot and hasty in temper, saying anything that came uppermost when put out. She, by the help of time, had got over the smart left by the summary collapse of her marriage, and had ceased to abuse Mr. Richard Foliott. All that was now a thing of the past. And, not having had a spark of love for him, he was the more easily forgotten.

"The wicked old sinner!" she burst out: and with emphasis so startling, that Anna, reading by the window, dropped her prayer-book.

"Helen! What is the matter?"

"*That's* the matter," flashed Helen, showing the half-burnt envelope and scorched letter, and flinging on the table the piece of paper I had slipped inside. Anna took the latter up and read it.

"Poor old man! It was only an accident, Helen; and I suppose, as Johnny says, no real damage is done. You must not say anything about it."

"Must I not!" was Helen's tart retort.

"Who is the letter from?"

"Never you mind."

"But is it from home?"

"It is from Mr. Leafchild, if you must know."

"Oh," said Anna, shortly. For that a flirtation, or something of the kind, had been going on between Helen and the curate, Leafchild, and that it would not be likely to find favour at Whitney Hall, she was quite aware of.

"Mr. Leafchild writes about the school," added Helen, after reading the letter; perhaps tendering the information as an apology for its having come at all. "Those two impudent girls, Kate and Judith Dill, have been setting Miss Barn at defiance, and creating no end of insubordination."

With the last word, she was leaving the room; the letter in her pocket, the burnt envelope in her hand. Anna stopped her.

"You are not going to show that, are you, Helen? Please don't."

"Mr. Todhetley ought to see it—and call Lee to account for his carelessness. Why, he might have burnt the letter!"

"Yes, of course it was careless. But I daresay it will be a lesson to him. He is very poor and old, Helen. Pray don't tell the Squire! he might make so much commotion over it, and then you would be sorry. Johnny asks you not."

Helen knitted her brow, but put the envelope into her pocket with the letter; not conceding with at all a good grace, and went down nodding her head in semi-defiance. The cream of the sting lay no doubt in the fact that the letter was Mr. Leafchild's, and that other eyes than her own might have seen it.

She did not say anything at the breakfast-table, though Anna sat upon thorns lest she should: Helen was so apt to speak upon impulse. The Squire talked of riding out; Whitney said he would go with him: Tod seemed undecided what he should do. Mrs. Todhetley read to them the contents of her letter—which was from Mary Blair.

"I shall go for a walk," announced Helen, when the rest had dispersed. "Come and get your things on, Anna."

"But I don't care to go out," said Anna. "It is a very disagreeable day. And I meant to help Mrs. Todhetley with the frock she is making for Lena."

"You can help her when you come back. I am not going through that Crabb Ravine by myself."

"Through Crabb Ravine!"

"Yes. I want to go to Timberdale."

It never occurred to Anna that the errand to Timberdale could have any connection with the morning's mishap. She put her things on without more ado—Helen had always domineered over her, just as Tod did over me—and the two girls went out together.

"Halloa!" cried Tod, who was standing by the pigeon-house. "Where are you off to?"

"Timberdale," replied Helen. And Tod turned and walked with them.

They were well through the Ravine, and close on to the entrance of Timberdale, before Helen said a word of what she had in her mind. Pulling the burnt envelope and the letter out then, she showed them to Tod.

"What do you think of that for a piece of carelessness?" she asked: and forthwith told him the whole story. Tod, hasty and impulsive, took the matter up as warmly as she had done.

"Lee ought to be reported for this—and punished. There might have been a bank-note in the letter."

"Of course there might," assented Helen. "And for Johnny Ludlow to want to excuse him, and ask me to hush it up!"

"Just like Johnny! In such things he is an out-and-out muff.

How would the world go on, I wonder, if Johnny ruled it? You ought to have shown it to the Squire at once, Helen."

"So I should but for Johnny and Anna. As they had asked me not, I did not quite like to fly direct in their faces. But I am going to show it to your postmaster at Timberdale."

"Oh, Helen!" involuntarily breathed Anna. And Tod looked up.

"Don't mind her," said Helen. "She and Johnny are just alike—making excuses for everybody. Rymer the chemist is postmaster, is he not?"

"Rymer's dead—don't you remember that, Helen? Before he died, he gave up the post-office business. Salmon, the grocer opposite, took to it."

This Salmon was brother to the Salmon (grocer and draper) at South Crabb. Both were long-headed men, and flourishing tradesmen in their small way.

"Poor old Lee!" cried Tod, with a shade of pity. "He is too ailing and feeble: we have often said it. But of course he must be taught not to set fire to the letters."

Anna's eyelashes were wet. "Suppose, by your complaining, you should get him turned out of his post?" she suggested, with the timid deference she might have observed to a duke—but in the presence of those two she always lost her courage. Tod answered her gently. When he was gentle to anybody, it was to her.

"No fear of that, Anna. Salmon will blow old Lee up, and there'll be an end of it. Whose letter was it, Helen?"

"It was from Mr. Leafchild—about our schools," answered Helen, turning her face away that he might not see its sudden rush of colour.

Well, they made their complaint to Salmon: who was properly indignant and said he would look into it, Tod putting in a word for the offender, Lee. "We don't want him reported to head-quarters, or anything of that kind, you know, Salmon. Just give him a reprimand, and warn him to be cautious in the future."

"I'll see to him, sir," nodded Salmon.

Being so near, they thought they would call on Herbert Tanerton and Grace at the Rectory; next, they just looked in at Timberdale Court—Robert Ashton's. Altogether, what with one delay and another, they arrived at home when lunch was nearly over. And who should be sitting there, but Sir John Whitney! He had come over unexpectedly to pass an hour or two.

Helen Whitney was very clever in her way: but she was apt to be forgetful at times, as all the rest of us are. One thing she had totally and entirely forgotten to-day—and that was, to ask Tod not to speak of the letter. So that when the Squire assailed them with reproaches for being late, Tod, unconscious that he was doing wrong, blurted out the truth. A letter from Mr. Leafchild to Helen had been partly burnt by old Lee, and they had been to Timberdale to complain to Salmon.

"A letter from Leafchild to Helen!" cried out Sir John. "That must be a mistake. Leafchild would not presume to write to Helen."

She grew whiter than snow. Sir John had turned from the table to face her, and she dared not run away. The Squire was staring and frowning at the news of old Lee's sin, denouncing him hotly, and demanding to see the letter.

"Yes, where is this letter?" asked Sir John. "Let me see it, Helen."

"It—it was about the schools, papa."

"About the schools! Like his impudence! What have you to do with the schools? Give me the letter."

"My gracious me, burn a letter!" cried the Squire. "Lee must be in his dotage. The letter, my dear, the letter; we must see it."

Between them both, Helen was in a corner. She might have been capable of telling a white fib and saying she had not the letter, rather than let her father see it. Anna, who knew she had it in her pocket, went for nobody; but Tod knew it also. Tod, suspecting no complications, was holding out his hand for her to produce it. With trembling lips, and fingers that shook in terror, she slowly drew it forth. Sir John took the letter from her, the Squire caught hold of the burnt envelope.

There was not a friendly hole in the floor for Helen to drop through. She escaped by the door to hide herself and her hot cheeks. For this was neither more nor less than a love-letter from the curate, and Sir John had taken it to the window to read it in the better light.

"Bless my heart and mind!" cried he when he had mastered its contents, just such an exclamation as the Squire would have made. "He—he—I believe the fellow means to make love to her! What a false-hearted parson he must be! Come here, Todhetley."

To see the two old heads poring over the letter together through their spectacles was something good, Tod said, when he told me all this later. It was just a love letter and nothing less, but without a word of love in it. But not a bad love letter of its kind; rather a sensible one. After telling Helen about the tracasserie in the parish school (which must have afforded him just the excuse for writing that he may have lacked), the curate went on to say a little bit about their mutual "friendship," and finished up by begging Helen to allow him to speak to Sir John and Lady Whitney, for he could not bear to think that by keeping silent they were deceiving them. "As honourable a letter in its way as you could wish to hear read," observed Tod; for Sir John and the Squire had read it aloud between them for the benefit of the dining-room.

"This comes of having grown-up daughters," bewailed poor Sir John. "Leafchild ought to be put in the pillory.—And where's Helen got to? Where is that audacious girl?"

Poor Helen caught it hot and strong—Sir John demanding of her,

for one thing, whether she had not had enough of encouraging disreputable young sparks with that Richard Foliott. Poor Helen sobbed and choked and hid her head, and finally took courage to say that Mr. Leafchild was just a saint on earth—not to be as much as named in the same sentence as Richard Foliott. And when I got home at night, everybody, from Helen downwards, was in the dumps, and Sir John had gone home to make mincemeat of the curate.

Buttermead was one of those straggling parishes that often obtain in rural districts. Whitney Hall was situated in it, also that famous school of ours, Dr. Frost's, with a sprinkling of other good houses. Some farm homesteads lay scattered about; and the village boasted of a street and a half.

The incumbent of Buttermead was the Rev. Matthew Singleton; his present curate was Charles Leafchild. Mr. Leafchild, though eight-and-twenty years of age, was only now ordained deacon, and this year at Buttermead was his first in the ministry. At eighteen he had gone out to the West Indies, a post having been found for him there. He did not go by choice. Being a steady-minded young fellow, religiously inclined, he had always wished to be a parson; but his father, Dr. Leafchild, a great light among church dignitaries, and canon of a cathedral in the north, had set his face against the wish. The eldest son was a clergyman, and of his preferment Dr. Leafchild could take tolerable care, but he did not know that he could do much in that way for his younger sons, and so Charles's hopes had to go to the wall. Spiritual earnestness, however, at length made itself heard within him to some purpose; and he resolved, come what might, that he would quit money-making for piety. The climate had never agreed with him; he had to leave it for home, and then it was that he made the change. "You would have been rich in time had you stuck to your post," remonstrated the Reverend Doctor to him: "now you may be nothing but a curate all your life." "True, father," was the answer, "but I shall hope to do my duty as one." So Charles Leafchild made himself into a parson, and here he was at Buttermead, reading through his first year, partially tabooed by his family, and especially by that flourishing divine, the head of it.

He was a good-looking young man as men go. Rather tall than not, with a pale, calm face, brown hair that he wore long, and brown eyes that had no end of earnestness in their depths. A more self-denying man could not be found; though as a rule young men are not famous for great self-denial. The small stipend given by Mr. Singleton had to suffice for all his wants. Leafchild had never said what this stipend was; except that he admitted one day it was not *more* than seventy pounds: how much less than that, he did not state.

Just a few roods out of the village stood a small dwelling called Marigold Cottage. A tidy woman named Bean lived in it with her two daughters, one of whom was the paid mistress of the national parish girls'-school. Mr. Leafchild lodged here, as the late curate had before him, occupying the spare sitting and bed room. And if Mrs. Bean was to be believed—and she had been a veracious woman all her life—three days out of the seven, at least, Mr. Leafchild went without meat to his dinner, having given it away to some sick or poor creature, who wanted it, he considered, worse than he did. A self-denying, earnest, gentle minded man; that's what he was: and perhaps it may be forgiven to Helen Whitney that she fell in love with him.

When Helen went home, more than a year before, carrying with her the mortification that came of her broken-off marriage and Captain Foliott's delinquency, she began to do what she had never done in her life before, busy herself a little in the parish: perhaps as a safety-valve to carry off her superfluous anger. The curate was a middle-aged man with a middle-aged wife and two babies, and Helen had no scruple in going about with him, here, there, and everywhere. To the schools, to the church to practise the boys, to visit the poor, went she. But when in a few months that curate's heart was made glad by a living—two hundred a year and a five-roomed vicarage—and Mr. Leafchild came in his place, it was a little different. She did not run about with the new curate as she had with the old, but she did see a good deal of him, and he of her. The result was, they fell in love with one another. For the first time in her life the uncertain god, Cupid, had pierced the somewhat invulnerable heart of Helen Whitney.

But now, could anything be so inappropriate, or look more hopeless? Charles Leafchild, B.A. deacon-curate of Buttermead, positively only yet reading for his full title, scantily paid, no prospect of anything better, lacking patronage; and Miss Helen Whitney, daughter of Sir John Whitney, baronet! Looking at it from a practical point of view, it seemed that he might just as well have expected to woo and wed one of the stars in the sky.

On the bleak February morning that followed Helen's expedition to Timberdale, Mr. Leafchild came down from his chamber and entered his sitting-room. The fire, a small one, for Mrs. Bean had received a general caution to be sparing of his coal, burnt brightly in the grate. He stood over it for a minute or two, rubbing his slender hands at the blaze: since he left the West Indies he had felt the cold more than formerly. Then he turned to the breakfast-table; and saw a small portion of cold neck of mutton, an uncut loaf, and a pat of butter. His tea stood there, already made.

"If I save the meat, it will do for dinner," he thought: and

proceeded to make his meal of bread and butter. Letty Bean, who mostly waited on him, came in.

"A letter for you, sir," she said, holding out a note.

He took it, looked at the handwriting, which was thick and sprawly, and not familiar to him, and laid it beside his plate.

"Sir John Whitney's footman brought it, sir," continued Letty, volunteering the information: and a hot colour flushed the curate's face as he heard it. He opened it then. Short and peremptory, it merely requested the Reverend Charles Leafchild to call upon Sir John Whitney that morning at Whitney Hall.

"Is the man waiting for an answer, Letty?"

"No, sir. He went away as soon as he gave it me."

Mr. Leafchild half suspected what had occurred—that Sir John must, in some way, have become acquainted with the state of affairs. He judged so by the cold, haughty tone of the note: hitherto Sir John had always shown himself so friendly. Far from being put out, Mr. Leafchild hoped it was so, and went on with his breakfast.

Another interruption. Mrs. Bean this time. She wore a mob cap and had lost her teeth.

"Here's that tipsy Jones come to the door, sir. He says you told him to come."

"Ah yes, I did; let him come in," said the curate. "Is he tipsy this morning?"

"No, sir, only shaky.—And what shall I get you for dinner, sir, to-day? I may as well ask, as I am here."

"That will do," he answered, pointing to the cold meat. "And please mash the potatoes."

Jones came in. He had obeyed the invitation betimes. The man was not an incorrigible bad doer, but weak and irresolute. If he worked two days, he played and drank three, and his wife and children suffered. Mr. Leafchild invited him to a seat by the fire, and talked to him long and persuasively, almost as one brother might talk to another, and gave him a hot cup of tea. Jones went away great in promises and penitence: and about eleven o'clock, the curate betook himself to the Hall.

Of all men living, the Squire perhaps excepted, Sir John was about the worst to carry out any troublesome negotiation. He was good-hearted, irresolute, and quick-tempered. When Mr. Leafchild was shown in, Sir John utterly forgot certain speeches he had conned over in his mind, broke down, went into a passion, and told the curate he was a designing, impudent villain.

Though his love for Helen, and that was intense, caused him to feel somewhat agitated in the presence of Helen's father, Mr. Leafchild's manner was quiet and calm, a very contrast to that of Sir John. After a little while, when the baronet had talked himself cool, Mr. Leafchild entered into a history of the affair: telling how

he and Miss Whitney had met without any intention of any kind, except of that which might be connected with the parish interests, and how, with as little intention, a mutual liking—nay, a *love*—had sprung up.

"Yes, that's all very fine," said Sir John, shuffling about his steel spectacles that were perched on his old red nose. "You knew she was my daughter; you knew well what you were about."

The young man reddened at the reproach. "Sir, indeed you misjudge me. I never thought of such a thing as falling in love with Miss Whitney until the love had come. Had she been one of the most obscure of young women, it would have been all the same."

"Then you are an idiot for your pains," retorted Sir John. "Why, goodness gracious me! have you not *one* single atom of common sense? Can't you see how unfit it is?"

"My family is a very good one; in point of fact as good as yours, Sir John—if you will pardon me for saying so thus freely," urged the curate in his gentle voice. "And though ——"

"Oh, bother!" interrupted Sir John, having no argument particularly confuting at hand. "That goes for nothing. What are your prospects?"

"They are not great. Perhaps I ought to say that I have no prospects as yet. But, sir ——"

"Now come! that's honest. No prospects. And yet you must go making love to my daughter!"

"I have not done that, sir, in one sense—'made love.' Hardly a word, I think, has passed between myself and Miss Whitney that you might not have heard. But we have, notwithstanding, been fully aware of the state of each other's heart ——"

"The state of each other's fiddlestick," spluttered Sir John. "A nice pair of you, I must say! And pray, what did you think it could come to?"

"What Miss Whitney may have thought, I have not presumed to ask. For myself, I confess that I am cherishing hopes of the future. It is some little time now since I have been wishing to speak to you, Sir John: and I intended, if you were so kind as not to entirely reject me, to write to my father, Dr. Leafchild, and lay the whole case before him. I think he can help me later if he will; and I certainly believe he will be only too glad to do it."

"Help you to what?"

"To a living."

"And, bless my heart and mind, how long do you suppose you might have to wait? A dozen years. Twenty years, for all you know. The curate who was here before you, poor Bell, had been waiting more than twenty years for one. He got it last year, and he was forty-seven years old."

Mr. Leafchild could say nothing to this.

"And a fine living it is, now he has got it!" went on Sir John. "No, no, sir: Helen Whitney cannot be dragged into that kind of fate."

"I should be the last to drag her, or wish to drag her, into it. Believe that, Sir John. But, if I got a good living, then I should like her to share it. And I think that my father would perhaps allow me some private means also, for Helen's sake. He has money, and could do it."

"But all those fancies and notions are just so many vapours, clouds up in the sky, and no better, don't you see! You young men are sanguine and foolish; you lose sight of facts in fallacies. We must look at what is, not at what might be. Why, you are not yet even a priest!"

"No. I shall be ordained to that in a few months' time."

"And then, I suppose you will either stay on here, or get a curacy elsewhere. And your income will be that of a curate's stipend—a hundred pounds a year, all told. Some curates get but fifty."

"True. We are but poorly paid."

"And that may go on till you are forty or fifty years of age! And yet, in the face of it, you ask me to let you have my daughter. Now, Mr. Leafchild, you are either a simpleton yourself, or you must think I am one," added Sir John, rising to end the interview, which had been to him one of thorough discomfort. "And I'm sure I hope you'll pick up a little common sense, young man, and I shall order Miss Helen to pick some up too. There, that's all."

"I trust you are not angry with me, sir," said the curate mildly, for Sir John was holding out his hand to be shaken.

"Well, yes, I am. Anything like this causes one such a worry, you know. I'm sure I and my wife have had no sleep all night. You must not think any more of Helen. And now good morning."

As Mr. Leafchild walked back to his lodgings at Dame Bean's, his hopes seemed to be about as dull as the wintry sky on which his nice brown eyes were fixed. His whole happiness, socially speaking, lay with Helen; hers lay with him; but only separation seemed to be looming in the air. Suddenly, when he was close to Marigold Cottage, a little rift broke in the leaden clouds, and a bit of pale blue sky shone forth.

"I will take it as an omen of good; pray God it may be so!" spoke the curate gladly and reverently, as he lifted his hat. "And —come what may, in storm and in tempest, God is over all."

Helen went home in the dumps and to sundry edifying lectures. An embargo was laid upon her parish work, and she only saw the curate at church. One month, two months, passed over thus, and she grew pale and thin. Sir John was cross, Lady Whitney uncomfortable; they were both simple-minded people, caring more for their children's happiness than for their grandeur. The former told

the Squire in confidence that if the young fellow could but get a decent living, he was not sure but he'd give in, and that he liked him ten thousand times better than he had ever liked that Foliott.

They met one day by accident. Helen was out moping in the long broad walk; which was beginning to be shady now, for May was all but in, and the trees were putting on their foliage. At the end of it she came to a standstill, leaning on the gate. The waters of the lake, out yonder, were blue as the unruffled sky. With a faint cry, she started aside, for Charles Leafchild stood before her.

Being a parson, and tacitly on honour to Sir John, he might have been expected to pass on his way without stopping; but Helen's hand was already stretched out over the gate. He could but shake it.

"You are not looking well," he said after a moment's silence. "I am sorry to see it."

What with his unexpected presence, and what with her mind's general discomfort, Helen burst out crying. Mr. Leafchild kept her hand in his.

"I have a bad headache to-day," said Helen by way of excuse for her tears. "It has been gloomy weather lately."

"Gloomy within and without," he assented, giving a meaning to her words that she had not meant to give. "But in every cloud, you know, however dark it may be, there is always a silver lining."

"We can't always see it," returned Helen, drying her tears.

"No; we very often cannot. But we may trust that it is there—and be patient."

"I think it sometimes happens that we never see it—that all is gloomy to the end; to the end of life. What then?"

"Then we may be sure that it is best for us it should be so. God directs all things."

Helen sighed: she had not learnt the love and faith and submission that made up the sum of Mr. Leafchild's life, bringing into it so strange a peace.

"Is it true that you are going to leave?" she asked. "We heard it mentioned."

"Yes: when I shall be fully ordained. Mr. Singleton has to take his nephew: it was an old promise—that he should come to him for his first year, just as I have. I think I shall go to Worcester."

"To Worcester?"

"I have been offered a curacy there by one of the minor canons whose living is in the town, and I feel inclined to take it. The parish is large and has a good many of the very poor in it."

Helen made a face. "But would you like that? You might be frightfully overworked."

"It is what I should like. As to the work—it is done for our Master."

He shook hands with her again, and left, the cheery smile still on

his face, the thoughtful light in his steadfast eyes. And never a word of love, you see, had passed.

It was, I take it, about a fortnight after this, that there went walking one afternoon to Whitney Hall a tall, portly, defiant-looking gentleman in gold-rimmed spectacles and a laced-up clerical hat. By the way he turned his head here and there, and threw his shoulders about as he strode along, you might have taken him for a bishop at least, instead of a canon—but canons in those days were a vast deal more self-important than bishops are in these. It was the Reverend Dr. Leafchild. A real canon was he, a great man in his own cathedral, and growing rich on his share of its substantial revenues: your honorary canons with their empty title and non-stipends had not sprung into fashion then. In his pompous manner, and he had been born pompous, Dr. Leafchild asked to see Sir John Whitney.

After Mr. Leafchild's interview with Sir John in February, he had written to his father and told him all about it, asking him whether he thought he could not help him later to a living, so that he might have a chance of winning Helen. But for Helen's being a baronet's daughter and the connection one that even the canon might be proud of, he would have turned a deaf ear: as it was, he listened. But Dr. Leafchild never did things in a hurry; and after some correspondence with his son (and a vast deal of grumbling, meant for his good), he had now come into Worcestershire for the purpose of talking over the affair with Sir John.

The upshot was that Sir John gave in, and sanctioned the engagement. There was an excellent living somewhere down in the North —£800 a year, a handsome house, and some land—the next presentation to which the canon could command. He had intended it for his eldest son; but he, by some lucky chance, had just obtained a better preferment, and the Doctor could promise it to Charles. The present incumbent was old and ailing; therefore, in all probability, it would very speedily fall in. The canon added that he might settle on the young people a small sum at their marriage, say a hundred a year, or so; and he also hinted that Charles might stand a chance of better preferment later—say a snug canonry. So Sir John shook hands heartily upon the bargain, invited the canon to stay dinner, and sent for Charles.

For the next six weeks who so happy as the curate and Helen! They came over to us at Dyke Manor (for we had gone back there) for a day or two, and we learnt to like him with our whole hearts. What a good, earnest, warm-natured man he was: and oh, how unselfish!

I remember one evening in particular when they were out together, pacing the field path. Helen had his arm, and he was talking to her in what seemed an uncommonly solemn manner: for his hand was lifted now and then in earnestness, and both were gazing upwards. It was a beautiful sky: the sun had set in splendour,

leaving crimson and gold clouds behind it, the evening star twinkled in the deepening canopy. Mrs. Todhetley sent me to them. A poor woman had come up for broth for her sick son, one of our labourers. She was in great distress: a change had taken place in him for the worse, he was calling for the clergyman to come to him before he died: but Mr. Holland was out that evening—gone to Evesham.

"Johnny, I—I think Mr. Leafchild would go," said the mater. "Do you mind asking him?"

Hardly any need to ask. At the first word he was hastening to the woman and walking away with her. Helen's eyes, gazing at the sky still, were wet with tears.

"Is it not beautiful, Johnny?"

"Very. It was a glorious sunset."

"But I never saw it as I see it now. He is teaching me many things. I cannot hope to be ever as he is, Johnny, not half as good; but I think in time he will make me a little like him."

"You have a happy life before you."

"Yes—I hope so," she said, hesitatingly. "But sometimes a feeling makes itself heard within me—that one who is so entirely fitted for the next world may not long be left in this."

It was autumn weather—October. A lot of us were steaming over to Worcester in the train. Miss Whitney from Cheltenham and a friend of hers—a maiden lady as ancient as herself, one Miss Conaway, of Devonshire—were staying at the Hall. Miss Conaway did not know Worcester, and was now being taken to see it, especially the Cathedral. Lady Whitney, Helen, Anna, and I made up the party, and we filled the carriage. My being with them arose from chance: I had come over accidentally that morning to Whitney Hall. Of course Helen hoped to see something besides the cathedral—her curate. For in June Mr. Leafchild, then in priest's orders, entered on his new curacy at Worcester, there to stay until the expected living should fall in

"How is he?" I asked of Helen, bending over the arm of the seat that divided us.

"Working himself to death," she whispered back to me, her tone a cross one.

"He said he was glad there would be plenty of work, you know. And it is a large parish."

"But he need not let it put *everything* else out of his head."

"Meaning you?"

"I have not heard from him for more than a week. Papa had a letter from Dr. Leafchild this morning. He said in it that Charles, when he last wrote, complained of being poorly."

"A great many curates do get sadly overtaxed."

"Oh, and what do you think?" went on Helen. "He is actually beginning to have scruples about taking that living, on the score that there'll be hardly any work to do."

"But—he will take it?"

"Yes, I suppose he *will*, because of me; but it will go against the grain, I fancy. I do think one may have too strict a conscience."

It was past one when we reached Worcester. Lady Whitney complained in the train of having started too late. First of all there was luncheon to be taken at the Star: that made it past two. Then various other things had to be done: see the cathedral, and stay the afternoon service, go over the china works at Diglis, and buy a bundle of articles at the linendraper's. All these duties over, they meant to invade Mr. Leafchild's lodgings in Paradise Row.

They took the draper's to begin with, the whole lot of them trooping in, one after another, like sheep into a pen: and I vow that they only came out again when the bell was going for three o'clock service. Helen was not in a genial mood: at this rate, there would not be much time left for visiting the curate.

"It was Aunt Ann's fault," she grumbled to me—"and mamma's. They were a good half hour looking at the stuff for the children's winter frocks. Aunt Ann maintained that cashmere was best, mamma held to merino. All the shelves they had taken down! I'd not be a linendraper's shopman for the world."

Just in time to get into our seats before the procession of clergy and choristers came in. The chanter that afternoon was Mr. Leafchild's rector: I knew him to speak to. But there's no space to linger upon details.

A small knot of people, ourselves and others, had collected in the transept after service, waiting for one of the old bedesmen to do the honours of the cathedral, when the chanter came down the steps of the side aisle, after disrobing in the vestry.

"Do you know who he is?" I said to Helen, who was standing with me a little apart.

"No—how should I know? Except that he is a minor canon."

"He is Mr. Leafchild's rector."

"Is he!" she eagerly cried, the colour coming into her face. And just then he chanced to look our way and nodded to me. I went up to him to speak.

"This is a terrible thing about Leafchild," he exclaimed in a minute or two.

"What is it?" I asked, my breath collapsing.

Helen, who had slowly paced after me on the white flags, stood stock still and turned as pale as you please.

"Have you not heard of his illness? Perhaps not, though: it has been so sudden. A few days ago he was apparently as well as I am now. But it was only last night that the doctors began to apprehend danger."

"Is it fever?"

"Yes. A species of typhoid, I believe. Whether caught in his ministrations or not, I don't know. Though I suppose it must have been. Leafchild has not seemed in good condition lately. He is most unremitting in his work, fags himself from morning till night, and lives anyhow: so perhaps he was not fortified to resist the attack of an enemy. He is very ill: and since last night he has been unconscious."

"He is *dangerously* ill, did you say?" spoke poor Helen, biting her lips to hide their tremor.

"Almost more than dangerous: I fear there is little hope left," he answered, never of course suspecting who Helen was. "Good afternoon."

She followed him with her eyes as he turned to the cloister door: and then moved away to the north entrance, looking like one dazed.

"Helen, where are you going?"

"To see him."

"Oh, but it won't do. It won't, indeed, Helen."

"*I am going to see him*," she answered, in her most wilful tone. "Don't you hear that he is dying? I know he is; I feel it instinctively as a sure and certain fact. If you have a spark of goodness you'll come with me, Johnny Ludlow. It's all the same —whether you do, or not."

I looked round for our party. They had disappeared up the other aisle under convoy of the bedesman, leaving Helen and myself to follow at our leisure; or perhaps not noticing our absence. Helen, marching away with quick steps, passed out at the grand entrance,

"It is not *safe* for you to go, Helen," I remonstrated, as we went round the graveyard and so up High Street. "You would catch the fever from him."

"*I* shall catch no fever."

"He caught it."

"I wish you'd be quiet. Can't you *see* what I am suffering?"

The sweetest sight to me just then would have been Lady Whitney, or anybody else holding authority over Helen. I seemed responsible for any ill that might ensue: and yet, what could I do?

"Helen, pray listen to a word of reason! See the position you put me in. A fever is not a light thing to risk."

"I don't believe that typhoid fever is catching. He did not say typhus."

"Of course it's catching."

"Are you afraid of it?"

"I don't know that I am afraid. But I should not run into it by choice. And I'm sure you ought not to."

We were just then passing that large and handsome druggist's

shop that the Squire always calls Featherstonhaugh's—just because Mr. Featherstonhaugh once kept it. Helen darted into it.

"A pound of camphor," said she, to the young man behind the right-hand counter.

"A pound of camphor!" he echoed. "Did you say *a pound*, ma'am?"

"Is it too much?" asked Helen. "I want some to put about me: I am going to see some one who is ill."

It ended in his giving her two ounces. As we left the shop she handed part of it to me, stowing the rest about herself. And whether it was thanks to the camphor, I don't know, but neither of us took any harm.

"There. You can't grumble now, Johnny Ludlow."

Paradise Row, as everybody knows, is right at the other end of the town, past the Tything. We had nearly reached the house when a gentleman, who looked like a doctor, came out of it.

"I beg your pardon," said Helen, accosting him as he met us, and coughing to hide her agitation, "but we think—seeing you come out of the house—that you may be attending Mr. Leafchild. Is he better?"

The doctor looked at us both, and shook his head as he answered.

"Better in one sense of the word, in so far as that he is now conscious; worse in another. He is sinking fast."

A tremor shook Helen from head to foot. She turned away to hide it. I spoke.

"Do you mean—dying?"

"I fear so."

"Are his friends with him?"

"Not any of them. His father was sent to yesterday, but he has not yet come. We did not write before, not having anticipated danger."

"Why don't they have Henry Carden to him?" cried Helen in passionate agitation as the doctor walked away. "*He* could have cured him."

"No, no, Helen; don't think that. Other men are just as clever as Henry Carden. They have only one treatment for fever."

A servant girl answered the door, and asked us into the parlour. She took us for the relations from the North. Mr. Leafchild was lying in a room near—a comfortable bed-chamber. Three doctors were attending him, she said; but just now the nurse was alone with him. Would we like to go in, she added: we had been expected all day.

"Come with me, Johnny," whispered Helen.

He was lying in bed, white and still, his eyes wide open. The nurse, a stout old woman in light print gown and full white apron, stood at a round table in the corner, noiselessly washing a wine-glass. She turned her head, curtsied, and bustled out of the room.

But wasn't he weak, as his poor thin hands clasped Helen's! His voice was hollow as he tried to speak to her! The bitter tears, running down her cheeks, were dropping on the bed-clothes.

"You should not have come," he managed to say. "My love, my love!"

"Is there no hope?" she sobbed. "Oh, Charles, is there *no* hope?"

"May God soothe it to you! May He keep you always in His good keeping!"

"And is it no trouble to you to die?" she went on, reproach in her anguished tone. "Have you no regret for the world, and —and for those you leave behind?"

"It is God's will," he breathed. "To myself it is no trouble, for He has mercifully taken the trouble from me. I regret you, my Helen, I regret the world. Or, rather, I should regret it, but that I know I am going to one brighter and better. You will come to me there, my dear one, and we shall live together for ever."

Helen knelt down by the bed; he was lying close on the edge of it; and laid her wet face against his. He held her to him for a moment, kissed her fervently, and then motioned to me to take her away.

"For your own sake, my dear," he whispered. "You are in danger here. Give my dear love to them all."

Helen just flicked her hand back at me, as much as to say, Don't *you* interfere. But at that moment the fat old nurse bustled in again, with the announcement that two of the doctors and Mr. Leafchild's rector were crossing the road. That aroused Helen.

One minute's close embrace, her tears bedewing his dying cheeks, one lingering hand-clasp of pain, and they parted. Parted for all time. But not for Eternity.

"God be with you ever!" he breathed, giving her his solemn blessing. "Farewell, dear Johnny Ludlow!"

"I am so sorry! If you could but get well!" I cried, my eyes not much dryer than Helen's.

"I shall soon be well; soon," he answered with a sweet faint smile, his feeble clasp releasing my hand, which he had taken. "But not here. Fare you well."

Helen hid herself in a turn of the passage till the doctors had gone in, and then we walked down the street together, she sobbing softly. Just opposite Salt Lane, a fly passed at a gallop. Dr. Leafchild sat in it muffled in coats, a cloud of sorrow on his generally pompous face.

And that was the abrupt end of poor Charles Leafchild, for he died at midnight, full of peace. God's ways are not as our ways. Or we might have been tempted to ask why so good and useful a servant should have been taken.

And so, you perceive, there was another marriage of Helen Whitney's frustrated. Fortune seemed to be against her.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

AMSTERDAM may almost be considered as a boundary mark between North and South Holland: two distinct worlds. Southwards you reach Rotterdam, and so progress beyond into a better known, more frequented country. Everyone is acquainted with Belgium. Who has not visited Antwerp? And yet, short though the journey be, who, comparatively speaking, has extended his travels into Holland, and made friends with its quaint old towns and streets; its drawbridges and gabled houses; its canals and itinerant barges; its ancient outlines and modern facings; its energetic people, with their straightforward countenances and shrill voices; its schiedam, curaçoa, and inevitable cheeses?

Southwards of Amsterdam is one thing. Northwards, on the other hand, you get into quite another world. Into the neighbourhood of the Dead Cities of the Zuyder Zee, where you feel almost as much withdrawn from civilization as if you had been landed on a South Sea island: though the uncomfortable possibility of being devoured by cannibals is, happily, not a feature on Dutch territory. Still higher, you reach the Helder, the most northerly point of Holland. Unable to get beyond this point, you must either put out to sea, or retrace your steps landwards. Up here the aspect of the country has changed. Flat enough, certainly; it must be that in Holland, and anything else would excite alarm; but the dykes have broadened into canals; there is almost more water here than land; the grass is beautifully green, but there is not so much of it; the cows have diminished in number; and the engineering works necessary for keeping out the besieging enemy have to be carried on with marvellous precision. If they were neglected, and gave way, the inhabitants, some fine night, would find themselves sailing out to the North Sea: the commencement to them of a voyage that would launch them into the yet greater sea of Eternity.

Just across, on the other side of the Zuyder Zee, and stretching up further northwards, you come upon Friesland, whose women are justly celebrated for their beauty. Before getting there, you wonder whether you will find the ancient place with all its distinguishing marks of antiquity about it; not only upon its houses and public buildings, but characterising its men and women, their costumes, habits, and mode of life. This reflection is, perhaps, made in a Dead City. Here everything is quaint and strange enough to promise well for the towns on the opposite shore. What is really to be seen there may be recorded in due time. For the present we must retrace our steps to Amsterdam.

There are many excursions to be made from the capital. Unless

the visitor wishes to do the country in the orthodox ten days, he may constitute this his head-quarters for a week or two, starting in the morning and returning at night; or absenting himself for two or three days, according to his plans. By this means he may always insure himself a comfortable bedroom, a well-appointed dinner, and a certain amount of luxury: three items not always to be counted upon northwards of Amsterdam.

One of our first excursions from Amsterdam, and one of the places I was most anxious to see, was Haarlem. On hearing that the celebrated organ was played every Tuesday from one till two, we started on that morning of the week for the old town: a journey of about forty minutes by rail. The country on either side possesses but few features of interest beyond the dykes, the cows, and the green fields. You leave Amsterdam on your left; a medley of masts, manufacturing chimneys, and red-tiled roofs. Windmills, of course, are conspicuous by their presence, or it would not be Holland; their sails following each other in a never ending chase. To your left hand is a canal, and every now and then you pass a barge being towed along by a patient, hard-working horse, which helps to give a suspicion of life to a somewhat monotonous scene. A woman is at the rudder, and a man is lazily smoking his pipe, lounging on the deck, or taking his ease at full length in the little cabin. Presently the wife informs him, with a shrill piping that penetrates even to the slow-moving train, that they are about to meet another barge, and the ropes must be looked to. He emerges like a snail from its shell, the rope is slackened and dips, the advancing barge passes lightly over it, and away they go again.

Away we go, too, towards Haarlem. We very soon reach it. Years ago, all round about here was under water. A vast lake which covered a large tract of land eleven leagues in circumference, and fifteen feet deep, and which, exposed to all the winds of heaven, was often lashed into storms as dangerous as those of the Atlantic. The lake gradually grew in extent until the sixteenth century, when the wind drove its waters forward and united them with those of several neighbouring lakes. For a time it was almost feared that North Holland would be turned into an island. As early as 1640, Leeghwater, a famous engineer, proposed the gigantic task of reclaiming it. He had already recovered, with signal success, the Beemster Polder, in North Holland, a tract of 18,000 acres. Leeghwater may almost be said to have possessed the singular property of amphibiousness, for he could read, write, or play on musical instruments under water, and remain a considerable time without coming up to the surface. So runs the record.

It was not until 1840 that the work of draining Haarlem lake was actually undertaken. Twelve years were required to accomplish the task. It is estimated that about a thousand million tons of water were pumped out, at a cost of nearly a million of money; an outlay

quickly repaid by the sale of a portion of the land reclaimed. It appears to be only the Dutch who are capable of undertakings so gigantic, perhaps because only the Dutch require them. The drainage is now carried on by three monster engines, constructed at Hayle Foundry, in Cornwall. It is said that the drainage of the lake has affected the annual rainfall, increased the temperature in summer and lowered it in winter, to the extent of half a degree.

The lake is now converted into a polder; its basin is covered with rich crops, and is overspread by farm buildings. The word polder signifies drained lake.

Thus Holland has to fight, not only against the inroads of the sea, but against internal waters as well, for it is the estuary of the Rhine, the Meuse, the Scheldt, the Waal, the Leck, and the Yssel. It is, therefore, impossible to over-estimate the nature and importance of the engineering operations that are constantly going forward, or the amount of skill brought to bear upon them. If adverse winds and swollen rivers combine at the same moment, inundations, in spite of the utmost care, inevitably follow. In many cases, by the construction of artificial banks, the waters are twenty feet above the level of the surrounding country. Inundations take place, on an average, about once in seven years.

So, through all this country that was once nothing but a sheet of water, we entered the station of the interesting old town of Haarlem.

Like Leyden, Haarlem is historically important. It has a bygone tragedy. Like Leyden it underwent a siege by the Spaniards in 1572, but, unlike Leyden, it resisted not to the end. The siege of Haarlem preceded that of Leyden. The bravery of its inhabitants was wonderful and unparalleled. It is a terrible record of valour, endurance, and sacrifice. Few sieges exceed it in intense and painful interest: in privations and horrors; in the cruelty and inhumanity of the conquering towards the conquered. What a picture remains to us of this important event in the history of Holland!

The lake of Haarlem forms a conspicuous feature in the records of that siege. It was through Haarlem the Spaniards had determined to make their entrance into Holland, a triumphant march over all the country. It lay in the narrowest part of the isthmus separating the Zuyder Zee from the German Ocean: a distance across of about five miles.

Haarlem, at that period, was one of the largest and most beautiful cities in Holland, but one of the least fortified. Its walls, old and turreted, were weak. The siege began the first week in December, 1572. The burgomaster, who had acted the part of a coward by running away at the commencement of the siege, sent a messenger to Haarlem, advising the inhabitants to surrender at discretion. The messenger was hanged by way of answer—a cruel but decided reply.

Don Frederic, son of the Duke of Alva, appeared before the walls of Haarlem, and, under cover of a dense fog upon the surface of

the lake, mustered a force 30,000 strong, against a garrison that numbered less than 4000. The fog which assisted the Spaniards also favoured the besieged. "A dense frozen vapour hung continually over the surface of the lake. Covered by this curtain, large supplies of men, provisions, and ammunition were daily introduced into the city, in spite of all the efforts of the besieging force. Sledges skimming over the ice; men, women, and even children, moving on their skates as swiftly as the wind, all brought their contributions in the course of the short dark days and long nights of December, in which the wintry siege was opened."

What a picture is here! What a scene of excitement, of perpetual planning and working; of hastening to and fro; of issuing forth backwards and forwards, surrounded on all sides by the enemy; now, perhaps, running into their very teeth in their rapid flights in quest of relief. How their hearts must have glowed, and warmed, and almost gloried in the sense of danger, that cheating of the enemy under cover of the kindly fog upon the lake! How like ministering spirits they must have seemed, going forth single-handed and empty, and, all perils successfully braved, returning reinforced in numbers, and laden with provisions! How one's heart burns, even now, at the thought of all that was taking place. The sense of mystery; of danger and uncertainty; of dauntless heroism. How, as we read the various records, we almost long to have been present, and formed one of that memorable host, that army of martyrs; one of those messengers who went forth ever and anon, as it were, on the wings of the wind, in their efforts to gather up relief and succour. See those sombre figures flitting to and fro under cover of the darkness and the fog that never lifted; flying hither and thither with amazing rapidity; all bound upon one tremendous errand—the relief of their beloved city. Imagine those dark figures issuing from secret gates and unseen pathways, passing the enemy; hastening on their work of life or death; and returning in bands laden with succour. Imagine them swiftly speeding, noiseless as a moon-shadow; lest a word uttered, or an unwary step, should reveal them to some ambushed foe; dark figures, black as night, looking like phantoms of another world. Invest them with a flaming sword, and you might take them for avenging spirits.

What days they must have been; days of excitement and glory; especially to the younger and more ardent men who took part therein. We cannot imagine a more fervent scene, a more fervent cause—that of saving their country from a cruel and oppressive foe; a foe given to no quarter; given to such tortures and barbarities as disgrace mankind, and sink it far below the human: a foe with all the vindictiveness and cruel treachery of the Spaniards of to-day, combined with the rude ignorance and superstition, the inquisitorial demonism, of the middle ages. Imagination grows excited, and longs to have been an eye-witness, and a partaker in the glorious deeds of heroism that fought so mournfully and hopelessly for life, and country, and

freedom. Nevertheless, we shudder, indeed, and turn pale at the ghastly record: for imagination once satiated with the heaping up of events and scenes of bravery and horror, what remained? Only the satisfaction of having fought against a foe unworthy of its privilege and claim to humanity; only the bitterness of falling beneath its unsparing sword, and of perishing in the face of that conquering, but remorseless savagery.

Not without a struggle was Haarlem lost. We read that the garrison, at last, numbered one thousand pioneers, three thousand fighting men, and about three hundred fighting women. The last was a most efficient corps; all were females of respectable character, armed with sword, musket, and dagger. Their chief, Renau Hasselaer, was a widow of distinguished family and unblemished reputation, about forty-seven years of age, who at the head of her amazons participated in many of the most fiercely-contested actions of the siege, both within and without the walls.

Picture this group of three hundred women, mingling with the men, and taking some of the most onerous and active duties upon themselves. See them standing above the walls, defying the enemy, their feminine nature for the moment cast aside and forgotten in their love for their city. We may be sure they worked valiantly. Once roused, there is an energy, a courage and bravery in woman, that seems to surpass anything man can accomplish. Exceptional women have in all times proved themselves the best, and the worst, of humankind, according to the circumstances of the case. They seem capable of falling to lower depths than man, and of soaring to greater heights.

So when Don Frederic established his batteries, and directed his shots against the gates, they repaired the breaches as fast as possible. Men, women, and children worked night and day at the task, which was their only hope. They brought bags of sand, blocks of stone, cartloads of earth from every quarter, and they stripped the churches of all their statues, which they threw by heaps into the gaps.

This was taking place on the 18th, 19th, and 20th of December. "After three days' cannonade the assault was ordered, Don Frederic only intending a rapid massacre. The place, he thought, would fall in a week, and that after another week of sacking, killing, and ravishing, he might sweep on to 'pastures new,' until Holland was overwhelmed. Romero advanced to the breach, followed by a numerous storming party, but met with a resistance which astonished the Spaniards. The church bells rang the alarm throughout the city, and the whole population swarmed to the walls. The besiegers were encountered not only with sword and musket, but with every implement which the burghers' hands could find. Heavy stones, boiling oil, live coals, were hurled upon the heads of the soldiers; hoops smeared with pitch and set on fire were dexterously thrown upon their necks. Even Spanish courage and Spanish ferocity were obliged to shrink before

the steady determination of a whole population animated by a single spirit. Romero lost an eye in the conflict, many officers were killed and wounded, and three or four hundred soldiers left dead in the breach, while only three or four of the townsmen lost their lives. The signal of recal was reluctantly given, and the Spaniards abandoned the assault. Don Frederic was now aware that Haarlem would not fall at his feet at the first sound of his trumpet. It was obvious that a siege must precede the massacre. He gave orders, therefore, that the ravelin should be undermined, and doubted not that, with a few days' delay, the place would be in his hands."

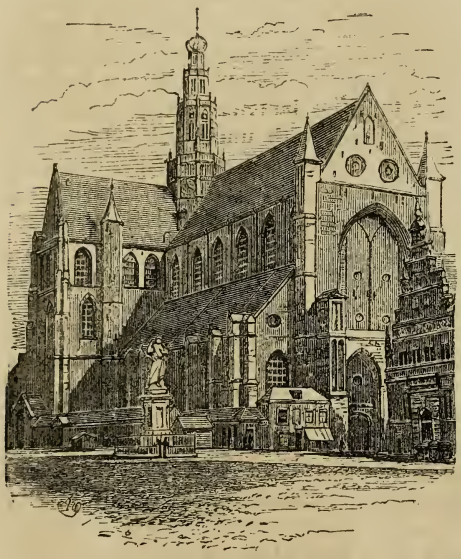
Thus commenced the memorable siege of Haarlem. The Spaniards began their mining operations, but as fast as they mined, the citizens countermined. Spaniard and Netherlander met daily in deadly combat within the bowels of the earth. Desperate and frequent were the struggles within gangways so narrow that nothing but daggers could be used, so obscure that the dim lanterns hardly lighted the death stroke. The mines were sprung with unexampled frequency and determination. Still the Spaniards toiled on with undiminished zeal, and still the besieged, undismayed, delved below their works, and checked their advance, by sword, and spear, and horrible explosions.

Then came a midnight assault in which the enemy expected to carry all before them at one stroke.

"The citizens continued to contest the approaches to the ravelin before the Crossgate; but it had become obvious that they could not hold it long. Secretly, steadfastly, and swiftly, they had, therefore, during the long wintry nights, been constructing a half-moon of solid masonry on the inside of the same portal. Old men, feeble women, tender children, united with the able-bodied to accomplish this work, by which they hoped still to maintain themselves after the ravelin had fallen.

"On the 31st of January, after two or three days' cannonade against the gates of the Cross and of St. John, and the intervening curtains, Don Frederic ordered a midnight assault. The walls had been much shattered, part of the John's Gate was in ruins; the Spaniards mounted the breach in great numbers; the city was almost taken by surprise; while the commander-in-chief, sure of victory, ordered the whole of his forces under arms to cut off the population who were to stream panic-struck from every issue. The attack was unexpected, but the forty or fifty sentinels defended the walls while they sounded the alarm. The tocsin bells tolled, and the citizens, whose sleep was not apt to be heavy during that perilous winter, soon manned the ramparts again. The daylight came upon them while the fierce struggle was still at its height. The besieged, as before, defended themselves with musket and rapier, with melted pitch, with firebrands, with clubs and stones. Meantime, after morning prayers in the Spanish camp, the trumpet for a general assault was sounded.

A tremendous onset was made upon the gate of the Cross, and the ravelin was carried at last. The Spaniards poured into this fort, so long the object of their attack, expecting instantly to sweep into the city with sword and fire. As they mounted its walls, they became for the first time aware of the new and stronger fortification which had been secretly constructed on the inner side. The reason why the ravelin had been at last conceded was revealed. The half-moon, whose existence they had not suspected, rose before them bristling with cannon. A sharp fire was instantly opened upon the besiegers, while at the same time the ravelin, which the citizens had undermined, blew up with a severe explosion, carrying into the air all the soldiers who had just entered it so triumphantly. This was the turning point. The retreat was sounded and the Spaniards fled to their camp. Thus was a second assault made by an overwhelming force, and led by the most accomplished generals of Spain, signally and gloriously repelled by the plain burghers of Haarlem."

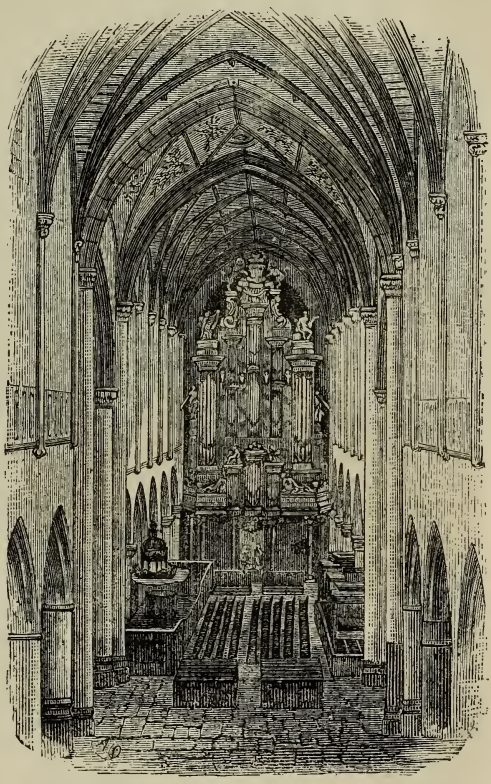


Old Church, Haarlem.

Space will not admit a tithe of the thrilling details of the siege of Haarlem, more full of interest and stirring incidents than the most exciting romance. Enough has been said to prove the undaunted courage and bravery of the inhabitants. Alas! it ended sadly for them. Unable to take the town by regular approaches, or by sudden attack, it was determined to reduce them by starvation. The horrors endured were beyond parallel. The siege was protracted until the month of July. Before then, hundreds of the inhabitants had perished of famine, falling dead in the streets by scores at a time. At length, when all hope was over, and it seemed that very soon every soul in the city must become a victim to fever, plague, or starvation, Don Frederic sent a letter to the magistracy and leading citizens, inviting a surrender at discretion, with the solemn assurance that no punishment should be inflicted; that ample forgiveness should be given if the town submitted without further delay. The inhabitants, unyielding to any earthly foe, were unable to resist the more terrible foe of famine. Half of them dead, all of them worn and emaciated, and

looking more like shadows flitting about the streets than men and women; all life and hope knocked out of them; no help at hand; what wonder that they yielded? The city formally surrendered at discretion on the 12th of July: seven months after the commencement of the siege.

But the Spaniards, once in, behaved with all the treachery of which they were capable. Forgetting their solemn promise, they massacred the people; they put to death the garrison; they committed every species of cruelty. Five executioners, with their attendants, were kept constantly at work; and when at last they were exhausted with fatigue, three hundred of the unhappy inhabitants were tied two and two, back to back, and drowned in the lake. Twelve thousand Spaniards had fallen in the siege of Haarlem.



FRONT VIEW OF CHOIR AND GREAT ORGAN.

Thus it ended: and thus commenced the invasion of Holland. We know how Leyden resisted a similar siege: and in the end, more favoured than her sister city Haarlem, conquered. But in the one case help was at hand, in the other there was none. In the one case the people were cheered, upheld, and guided by one of the bravest burgomasters that ever filled the office; in the other the burgomaster had fled from his post like a coward and left his people to take care of themselves or to follow his example. A complete account of the siege with all its sad details is to be found in Motley, whence some of these extracts have been taken. Those who do not understand the Dutch language, and have neither time nor opportunity for reading Dutch books and poring over Dutch records, will find all they need wish to learn in these volumes. I have been unable to resist alluding in these few words to the siege of Haarlem; for unless the reader

knows something of its details it is impossible for him to realize the interest that surrounds the old town like a halo of light; events that, let us hope, will have won for many of its victims, in the Great Day, a martyr's crown; for surely those who spared neither life nor possessions in defence of their beloved country, must have been equally fervent and persevering in a yet higher cause.

With such a past history, no wonder that, to the visitor, Haarlem is one of the great central points of attraction in all Holland. It is built on the Spaarne, a sluggish stream which winds lazily through its streets. One of the first impressions on entering the town is that it is wonderfully clean and well built. It is quiet enough, even to the point of repose, and yet possesses a generally flourishing appearance. There is an air of comfort, if not of wealth, about it; resulting no doubt from the fact that each house seems to be well cared for by its occupants. Very different must be the present aspect of the town from what it was in the days of the siege. To-day very many of the streets are modern, and not particularly Dutch-like in appearance. Some, however, have survived the ordeal of siege and centuries. If walls could speak what a tale could they unfold of the bygone events they have witnessed. Some of the houses are bent and tottering with age; others are still strong and upright in their antiquity. The Groote Markt, or Great Market Place, is the most interesting spot in Haarlem, as containing the old Church, with its world-famed organ, and the old Town Hall, which has survived the siege, and is a quaint and beautiful building. The Market Place contains other houses, too, of great antiquity; and the reader will observe in the accompanying illustration that one of them, immediately in front of the Church, is very much out of the perpendicular.

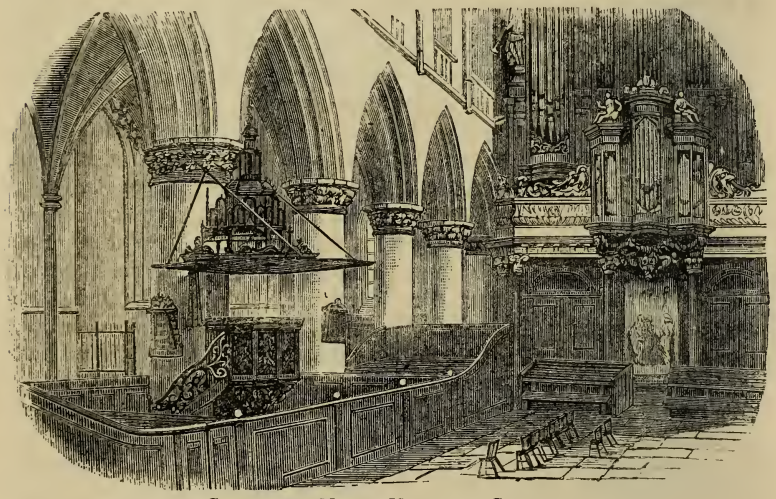
The hour for the playing of the organ not having arrived, we went into the Town Hall to inspect its collection of pictures. This wonderful old building possesses an interior, and guards treasures, worthy of itself. The pictures are not numerous, but there are some very rare ones amongst them. Eight or ten of these are most striking examples of Franz Hals, an artist little known in England, and not sufficiently appreciated for that reason. To do this, you must pay Haarlem a visit. His pictures are full of genius; full of force and vigour; his figures are so life-like that they stand out from the canvas, and almost appear to speak; embodiments, not mere representations of men. Most of his pictures are corporation pieces, and attitudes, action, colouring, details, all are alike admirable and amazing. He lived before the time of Rembrandt, and in some respects is equal or superior to that great master. It is all healthy, genuine work; without the introduction of any artistic trickery to heighten the effect. He felt, doubtless, that he required nothing of the kind; his genius by its own force and power was all-sufficient. In short, he may have his equals in his own department of art, but scarcely his superiors. Yet how little is known of him in England;

how few of his pictures do we possess. In the late winter exhibition at Burlington House there were two pictures catalogued as by Franz Hals. The characteristics of the master were there, but they were infinitely inferior to those of Haarlem.

The Town Hall possesses another gem, unknown, rarely seen; of which I have met with no record. It is a small room opening out of the Franz Hals gallery. When many persons are present, or when the keeper is not in an especially amiable mood, the room is not shown. Visitors depart unconscious of what they have missed. That morning, happily, we were almost alone in the gallery, and the old man, doubtless, was in the best of tempers; for, beckoning to us mysteriously, he swung back one of the pictures, drew forth a key, and fitted it into a lock in the wall. We wondered what was coming; whether a species of Bluebeard's closet was about to be disclosed. The lock turned, a door opened, and we entered a small room. But what a room! The moment I was fairly in I felt that I breathed another atmosphere. Nay, at the first moment I forgot to breathe.

It was an old room fitted up in the 16th century style, with Spanish trophies and antique furniture; ancient glass, old jars, wonderful old armour; flags that had waved in the breeze during the siege and bid defiance to the enemy. From a cross beam in the ceiling an old ship was suspended; an old Spanish man-of-war. Everything was rich and dark with age; here and there old green curtains hung, of most exquisite tint; the oak of the furniture, massive and grand, bore the hue of centuries. The whole tone of the room was so beautiful, so refined, so old-world-like, so different from the atmosphere we had just quitted, that it was like passing backwards at one step from the 19th into the 16th century. The transition was almost too sudden, too startling. It could not be fully grasped in the first moment. Then, suddenly, the subtle power of the room seemed to float in upon the mind, and imbue it with its influence: as in a trance, the spirit of the gazer fell back into the old days; the bygone days of war and battle, of famine and murder, of agony and death. A whole siege of horror and suffering passed before the imagination. There, dust-stained and rent, hung the flag that had been borne proudly aloft by an arm whose owner, one moment shouting the war-cry to his rallying comrades, the next, perchance, lay low in the silence of death. The Haarlem of to-day, its influence and morals, faded away, as in the scenes of a shifting phantasmagoria: and in its place, uprose the vision of the past, distinct and realized: all the courage and bravery of a despairing people fighting for life and liberty; the famished phantoms, as shades, flitting through the streets, living ghosts, destined to graves amongst the living. There, hanging up, was a portrait of the brave Maid of Haarlem, bearing the standard, herself ready for death or victory. It all rose before the imagination vividly as if all had been actually taking place. The gloom of the day threw its deep shadows over the room, and heightened its weird-like effect.

The trance lasted less time than it takes to tell; and with a sigh almost of pain the spirit returned to present realities. In the left-hand corner was a deep window of painted glass, old and beautiful, and of a tone nothing modern can match, for nothing but age will give it. Thrown out in its light was an old oaken carved press, an exquisite piece of furniture which fitted itself wonderfully to the room. The whole room indeed was one about which a poem might be written; one that would send an artist distracted in his wish to reproduce it upon canvas. Difficult, indeed, would be his task. But no painting on canvas could come up to the room itself. There must be just the difference there always is between looking at reality and looking at a picture. For this very reason: this *something* that is wanting,



Choir and Nave, Haarlem Church.

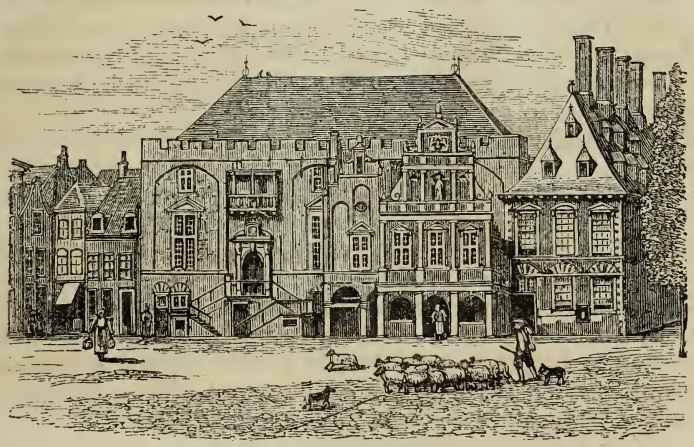
and that can never be reproduced because it cannot exist apart from the reality itself: it is difficult to say whether looking at a beautiful picture is productive most of pain or pleasure. This is not a feeling that can be entered into by merely passing through a gallery and gazing upon the works of art that line its walls. It will only come after a long season; when you have gazed often upon your *own* collection of pictures, be it large or small; and become familiar with them as with old friends. Then it is that the pain as well as the pleasure steps in and asserts itself; until you begin to doubt which is the stronger of those twin genii.

A. was enchanted. He immediately felt that his visit to Holland, if not his mission in the world, was to paint this old room. He could never rest until it was done. Subsequently, in a deputation of one, I called on the Mayor, or Burgomaster, on A.'s behalf, who feared that the worthy gentleman could not speak English, and they should

never come to a mutual understanding. But alas! permission was not granted. The Burgomaster received me with every courtesy it was possible to manifest. He assured me that as far as he was concerned the room was perfectly at my service. But unfortunately he had no authority over the museum. All that lay with the president and the council. And, unhappily, but a very short time ago they had come to a final determination never again to allow the room to be painted. It had been painted once, and once only : they would never give a second permission.

I ventured to ask the reason for so arbitrary a decision.

It was owing, returned the Burgomaster, to the conduct of an Englishman or an American—he could not precisely say which. In the presence of the Englishman before him, added the polite Burgo-



Town Hall, Haarlem.

master in a flattering parenthesis, with a courtly bow more French than Dutch, he ventured to say it must have been an American. However, it was one or the other. This foreigner of doubtful nation had requested permission to paint the room. It was graciously accorded. He then proceeded to make himself somewhat unpleasant. The whole furniture of the room must be altered to suit his plans. A table here must be placed there : chairs, cushions, cabinets and their contents, must all be transposed, according to his ideas of the artistic. Things that had not been moved in the memory of man must be brought out into fresh lights and new reliefs. Furthermore, he proceeded to inform them that he must be locked into the room, and on no account disturbed ; visitors must be denied admission and the gaze of the vulgar excluded, as long as his work was in hand. In short, concluded the Burgomaster, his demands were so exacting, that the indignant president withdrew his permission ; he was not allowed to do anything in the room ; and a rule was forthwith passed

that never again should permission be granted under any circumstances whatever.

But the Burgomaster, to prove his goodwill in the matter, did what he could. He sent his people to various members of the council to ascertain if for once the veto might be withdrawn. The council, unwilling to take the responsibility upon themselves, referred the matter to the president. The latter, as fate would have it, was sunning himself under Italian skies. Pining for a little variety of scene, he had exchanged the canals of Holland for those of Venice. Finally, the matter had to be abandoned: and if A.'s presentiments were correct, his visit to Holland was a failure, and his mission in the world will never be accomplished. But to return.

After remaining some time in this wonderful room, the mind wrapped in the impressions it produced, we went over to the church to listen to the world-famed organ. For many years it was the largest and most noted in Europe; but of late we have built instruments of such size and power in England that it has ceased to be the marvel it once was.

The great church, as it is called, is certainly one of the most imposing buildings in Holland. Perhaps this is not saying very much for a country scarcely famous for its churches. There is a good deal of beauty about its aisles and their perspective, and the twenty-eight pillars. The church, erected in the fifteenth century, is a cruciform building; the tower is 255 feet high. A cannon ball in the wall is pointed out as a reminiscence of the siege. The nave is divided from the choir by a brass screen of finely-wrought workmanship. Below the organ is a large white sculptured group representing Music and Poetry expressing their gratitude to Haarlem for the erection of the organ. The instrument was built in 1735, by Christian Müller, of Amsterdam, and was restored in 1868. It possesses four manuals, or keyboards, 64 stops, and 5000 pipes, the largest of which is 15 inches in diameter, and 32 feet long.

A tolerable audience had assembled in the church when we entered it a few minutes before one o'clock. I noticed here, as elsewhere, the very small amount of reverence Dutchmen pay to their churches when they enter them. Unless it is Sunday, and service is being held, they, for the most part, never think of uncovering their heads, but stroll through the aisles, or sit down to listen to the music without once taking off their hats.

The organ began soon after we entered. As the first few notes went pulsing and waving through the air, their wonderful sweetness was apparent. The player began in a quiet strain which he gradually increased in volume until the chords went crashing and echoing through the building, filling it with grand sounds of harmony and beauty. The organ was certainly wonderful in tone; worth even a long journey; something to hear and to remember. The whole place seemed filled with sound; the lofty aisles rang with harmony.

Suddenly the player ceased, and the echoes repeated themselves in the arches, until the last one died away, and left the listener quiet and subdued, filled with an impression that words or speech would only destroy. Here was another trance, but of a different nature from the trance in the old room, and yet closely allied to it. Presently the player began again, and I wandered away from the crowd to the bottom of the church, where, unseeing and unseen, I could enjoy the music in undisturbed solitude. This time he chose that sweetest of sweet songs, by Mendelssohn, with its enchanting melody and exquisite accompaniment, Auf Flügeln des Gesanges (On wings of song I'll take thee). Never shall I forget those exquisite notes, as they floated through the air, gathering sweetness as they went. I could only close my eyes from the garish day, and, ensconsed behind a pillar, take in all the sound. I felt out of this world altogether, and transplanted to some paradise of music. Earth, with all its sharp thorns, which are sure to find us out occasionally, as we journey along the road of life's pilgrimage, had disappeared. It almost seemed, under the influence of that melody, those soft speaking notes, that the spirit would rejoice never to re-awaken : to be wafted upwards into realms of bliss where the only awaking would be to yet greater rapture.

"Dort wollen wir niedersinken
Unter dem Palmenbaum,
Und Lieb' und Ruhe trinken,
Und träumen seligen Traum!"

Memory echoed the words as the melody repeated itself over and over again. It was indeed a happy dream ; one I could have dreamed on for hours and never stirred, or returned to earthly matters. But it came to an end at last. The soft melody, lingering at its conclusion, died away ; the quiet chords ceased ; and I descended to the ordinary level with a rude shock. A still ruder shock on rejoining the small group of people, to find them laughing and chatting, and apparently utterly unable to enter into any of the feelings and emotions the music might be thought to inspire. Not a few of them were English, and they were talking of the fine tones and effect as a man will speak of good wine, or the points of a horse, or the flash of dark eyes. The element that addresses itself directly to the soul, that appeals to it more forcibly than books, or music, or even the beauty of nature ; more powerfully and immediately than any external influence can, save music itself ; was utterly lost upon them. And yet they had come far to hear it. The player changed his theme, and went into louder and more spirited music : the Bridal Chorus from "Löhengrin," the March from "Tannhäuser," and such like compositions, grand but of a different school. The spell was broken.

Issuing from the church, we went up to the bronze statue of Coster rected beside it. The Dutch claim for Coster—or Janszoon,

according to his correct name—the invention of the art of printing. The house in which he was born somewhere about the year 1400, is opposite the church on the north side—and is to be recognised by his bust and a Latin inscription. Very near the church is Teyler's Museum, which possesses the most powerful electric batteries in the world. It almost produces a shock to look at them.

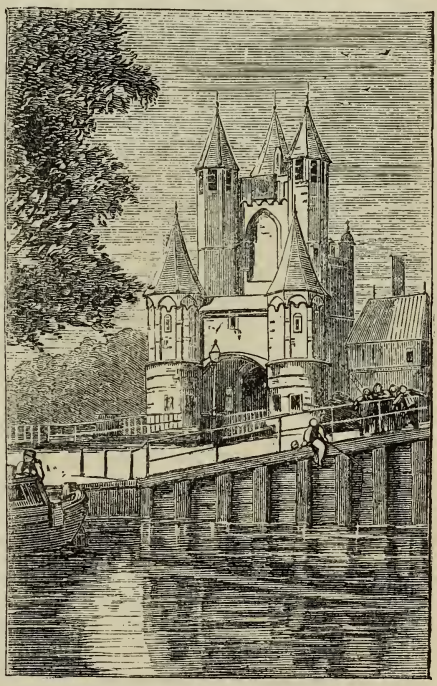
Haarlem, so famous for its siege, and its terrible records of the past, is also famous for more peaceful occupations. About the year 1636, the flower trade of Holland became so important as to assume the form of a mania. Rare bulbs realized fabulous prices. It is said that a "Semper Augustus" realized 13,000 florins; an "Admiral Enkhuisen," 5,000; and so on. A single Dutch town is said to have gained upwards of ten million florins in one year, by the sale of tulip roots; and a merchant in Amsterdam realized 68,000 florins in four months in the same manner. For a "Semper Augustus" was once offered, it is said, 4,600 florins, a new carriage, a pair of greys, and a complete set of harness. In another case, a country house, luxuriously furnished, a large garden, and a couple of cows, were exchanged for a single root. Again, a cook having mistaken a tulip root for an onion, and cooked it accordingly, was seized with such remorse that he went out forthwith and committed suicide. The system at length became one of complete gambling, and was put down by government.

East Nave of Haarlem Church.

Of the neighbourhood of Haarlem we cannot speak here, nor is it necessary to do so. The inhabitants themselves are exceedingly proud of their environs. A gentleman I chanced to meet in the train one morning: who, after a short conversation, with the greatest politeness, gave me his card, intimating that I should find it a passport in Haarlem to all places I might wish to see, and all doors I might wish to open, including free access to the organ if ever I cared to while away an hour by discoursing sweet music, or, like St. Cecilia, draw an

angel down: assured me that unless I made myself acquainted with the environs of Haarlem, I could not be said to have seen Holland. But all things are estimated by comparison. In a country singularly deficient in the beauties of nature, a sandhill becomes a mountain, and a moderately cultivated garden is converted into a paradise.

That afternoon, at any rate, when the organ was over, we did no more than pay another short visit to the Town Hall and its wonderful pictures. But the little old room was locked up for the day, and we saw it no more. Perhaps it was as well not to disturb a first impression; at least I felt it so. I had gone through enough for one day, and gladly jumped into a friendly droschke, en route for the station. The rain was now coming down as if it meant to form a second small lake; and a comfortable carriage and a tolerably quick train to Amsterdam formed a conjunction of mercies for which to be thankful. Once more we passed the same monotonous landmarks upon the road, now made doubly gloomy by the downpouring rain. The sluggish canal, the plodding barge, in the cabin of which both husband and wife had wisely taken refuge from the descending elements. There, on either side, were the stunted trees; the green fields; the poor cows, looking sleek, wet, stupid, and uncomfortable in the rain. A heavy mist, dense as a cloud, commenced to rise. Then loomed out the tall chimneys, the red roofs, the masts and shipping of the Capital; and we steamed to an anchor. Our journey was over. Alas! the repose and quiet, the historical and romantic atmosphere of Haarlem, were exchanged for the noisy, bustling, commercial streets, but also the life and activity, the full pulsation of energy and vigour, determination and earnestness, of Amsterdam.



Amsterdam Gate, Haarlem.

Charles W. Wood.

THE CHILD-ANGEL

A Legend of Devon.

By the Author of "Forgotten Lives," "Olive Varcoe," &c.

A FROWNING fortress and two or three narrow streets gathered into its shadow; a moated castle, cold and cruel, and a few miserable huts clustered around it—these were the towns and villages of England in the days of this legend.

Many, in those hard times, lived in the woods or hid in caves. They were not more comfortless there than in their dismal dwellings. If the rain dripped on them from green boughs, or the rocks beneath which they sheltered, it was at least bright and clear as it fell from heaven; and they had thus the soft sunshine and the pure light, which never entered their dark homes.

Some sought refuge in the woods from a love of peace and solitude, others escaped thither in hatred, fear, and defiance. These last were the victims of the tyrannous times — men fleeing from injustice, defeat, disaster, and cruelty; and from these there was no escape save in the wilderness. It was hard to lose an eye or a hand because a wicked lord was angry, or a sour priest offended; it was better to roam the woods a sound man than stay in the town maimed or blinded.

So the ranks of the fugitives swelled, and the forest came to be the dwelling-place of outlaws and hermits. Around these some glamour and halo still linger down to these very times, like a faint light by which we can see the terror and the awe investing them in the old days.

The woods held yet a third victim of bad laws and a cruel church; but around this outcast there grew no odour of sanctity, no halo of romance—a scapegoat, upon whose head was laid the sins of many, and for whom nor man nor woman had mercy. Scathed and scarred by sin and sorrow, marred and defenceless through age and weakness, this outcast of the woods lived without the pale of human charity, and died like a viper in a hole or a cleft of the rock. If the hermit met her he crossed himself and turned his eyes away; while the outlaw gave her only a ribald jeer, or cursed her as she passed. But there is One who has said: "I will gather together my outcasts," and "Even the beasts of the forests shall praise me." So let no human soul think it is forgotten before God.

In a beautiful wood in Devonshire, near enough to the sea to catch here and there through the green vistas a glimpse of its shining waters, there once lived, so our legend says, one of these

outcasts. She was a woman, weird and wild in aspect, fierce and gloomy in temper—a woman so sullen and hard that she never asked for pity, or sought companionship. She lived in utter solitude, as uncared for as the dry leaves which died, and fell, and were forgotten.

Her dwelling-place she had made in a natural cave or grotto, formed by an overhanging rock of dusky Devonshire marble. A stream ran along at its base like a silver thread, glancing and winding among rocks and tangled bushes till it passed out of sight in the wilds of the wood, leaving a song in the air.

Its beauty never touched the hard eyes of the woman: she never looked at it, or heeded it, save when she was athirst, or needed water for her rough work. In the same hard way she thrust aside the honeysuckle and the wild roses which clustered on the rock, giving them only a muttered curse for littering her dwelling or obstructing her path.

She had long hands, bony and uncanny to look at: they never did a kind or gentle office for human being—those hands. Every day, with her long fingers and a rusty nail, or a jagged stone, she dug wearily into the hard ground, searching for roots.

Ah! it was a terrible life she led, that lone, sullen, ireful woman, growing very aged among the hoar rocks of the wood, and the countless shadows of leaves which fell on her quietly, as her bent figure and her angry face went to and fro between the trees and the sunshine.

In the spring-time, when violets sprang up by gnarled roots or clustered on shady banks, the old woman knelt on them often, or trampled down their delicate white and purple petals in her weary diggings into the stony ground; but she never gathered one, or felt her heart grow tender at the sight of them.

It was beautiful in the summer-time to wander in the wood when the air was filled with summer whisperings, and every leaf was fluttering with life, and between the tall trees came glimpses of the sea glittering in the sunshine, or calmly blue in the shadow of the cloudless sky.

In the winter-time, when the slender grass was bent by the hoar frost, or the boughs, snow-laden, glistened and sparkled in the faint sun, and the sullen dash of the angry sea, as it lashed the shore, mingled with the wistful rustle of dead leaves as the wind scattered them in the path—the wood was beautiful still.

But this beauty was unfelt—was nothing to the outcast woman. Life was too hard and lonely and bitter for her to heed such things. The fresh green leaves were less lovely to her than the withered ones, for these she gathered up to make a dry bed for herself; and a dead bird was better than a living one, for the first was food and the last was only a little fleeting music on the wing. She snared the birds when she could, and when they escaped her

she cursed them. With her long bony hands she clutched at winter berries or summer fruits, or gathered broken sticks for her fire, or fresh boughs to shade her dwelling. She took all the blessings the wood gave, but never rendered it back a thankful word or a happy look.

There is a why and a wherefore for every wickedness beneath the sun; but it would be too long and sad to tell the story of this woman's outraged life, which heaped upon her soul all this blindness. The sorrow God sends softens, but the misery man makes hardens the human heart. The mother from whom God has taken little children cannot be wicked, for she knows there are angels waiting for her in Heaven; the daughter who has knelt at her mother's death-bed and heard her last prayer cannot be wicked, for she dares not grieve the spirit of the blessed.

But this wretched woman had never known her mother, or nursed a child upon her knee. Throughout her long, hard life there was no happiness to look back upon, the memory of which might soften her heart: no tenderness, whose remembrance now could bring tears to her withered eyes. All was injustice, wrong, and misery; God may have had pity on her, but man had none.

One day she sat rocking herself to and fro before the entrance of her cave, her long grey hair streaming over her face, and her dark eyes looking fierce and glaring as she sat in the deep shadow of the overhanging rock. The stream rippled softly at her feet, trickling over its pebbles with a happy sound that seemed to tell of summer gladness, while the tendrils of the woodbine swayed in the breeze, mingling its scent with the clustering June roses.

As she rocked her gaunt body to and fro, her withered eyes watched idly the swirl and dance of a dead leaf—dead even in summer—which the wind was whirling round and round over the ripples of the brook. Suddenly a shadow fell into the water, just where the leaf dropped down—the shadow of a child, with white robe torn with thorns, and feet bare and bleeding, as though from many a weary wandering. Standing by the brook-side the child bathed one tiny tired foot in the stream, and watched the water rippling over it with a happy smile.

The old woman stared in amazement for a moment; then she started up, and with fierce and angry gesture heaped curses on the child; while he gazed back at her with blue eyes full of wonder and of pity.

"You shall not bathe your feet in that stream," she shrieked. "It is mine!"

"It is God's," said the little one. The answer angered the woman into madness. Darting into her cave, she seized a burning brand from the fire and rushed upon the child with murder in her words and looks. With one bony hand she clutched him by his golden curls, and with the other raised the brand high in the

air to strike; but at this instant the sun parted the clouds in the sky, beams of glory came down from Heaven and formed a halo round the golden head, bright wings rustled over him, his white robe descended to his feet in shining folds—an angel stood before her!

The woman fell upon her face expecting instant death, but she felt only the touch of a gentle hand laid upon her head, and she heard a voice like the sound of distant music, whispering, "Fear not."

She knew the angel was gone, because the shadow of his glory had faded away from the brook, and the water mirrored only the grey fleecy clouds of the summer sky; still she lay with her face upon the earth, wrestling with her new-born soul, till the night breeze blew chilly over her, and the stars came out one by one; then she rose painfully, and with slow step went into her cave.

For many days after this no one saw her at her wonted haunts in the wood, but at last the hermit met and stopped her. She had a bunch of wild roses in her hand, and her face was very pale. He asked if she had been ill. She answered, No; but said she had been wrestling with an evil spirit. To the outlaws she gave the same reply, and they believed her literally, but the hermit understood her thought.

It was but a short time after this she saw the child again.

He bathed his bleeding foot in the stream, and watched the play of the water smilingly as she had seen him do before. Trembling and wondering, she looked on, till his blue eyes turned on her, and his little hand, raised in the air, beckoned to her.

With faltering step she came to him, and, falling on her knees, whispered: "Dear angel, are you come to bless me?"

"I cannot understand your words, bonne mère," replied the child.

She started up with a cry of joy, and burst into heart-felt tears. He had spoken to her in her own tongue—the language of her childhood, which had not touched her ears since she—then a girl of twelve—was stolen away from her Norman home by English pirates. But she had never forgotten this dearly-loved speech of her native land. In the deep recesses of her heart it lay like a shrined treasure, the sole thing, till now, she had worshipped.

She flung her arms around the child—for she saw he was no angel—and in his own tongue implored him to speak again.

It was nearly her own story that he told her:—A French and English ship had met in mid-channel and fought fiercely. The French ship was taken, and the innocent child was the sole creature allowed to live. Sailing past the Devonshire coast this day with its prize, the English brig had cast anchor and sent a boat ashore for water. The sailors had taken the child with them, and he, left alone on the beach, had wandered into the wood and lost himself.

The ship was his only home now, and in artless words he prayed the old woman to take him back to the boat's crew.

He was from her own land, he spoke her own tongue, and she had

seen a vision, in which he came to her dwelling as an angel; no wonder she was unwilling to let him go, and gazed wistfully at the sea, as, carrying him in her arms, she journeyed towards it through the mazes of the wood.

The beach lay two weary miles away, but she said little on the road; her heart was over-burdened, it was full of fear and thought, and she held the child with tight-clasped arms. A smile broke upon her lips at last when she reached the strand and saw it empty, while, with white sails set, the ship was going fast up-channel.

She pointed to the sail glistening in the sun, and comforted the little one as he wept for the loss of his rough home. Then, with his tiny arms around her neck, and his soft face pressed against her wrinkled cheek, she turned back to the wood. But not to go straight home; many a mile she went out of her way to beg for milk and wheaten bread for her new charge.

The rough, kindly people gave willingly what they had, gazing with wondering eyes at the child's beauty and the changed look on the old woman's face.

The sun was sinking when she laid the boy on the bed of leaves in her cave, and busied herself to kindle a fire to warm the bread and milk. Then she sat and watched him as he ate, while he prattled to her in her own tongue till the tears swelled into her eyes and, trickling over her withered cheeks, fell slowly into the embers at her feet.

The child, seeing this, put down his porringer and asked, softly:

"Was your father killed at sea, granny?"

"No, my child."

"Did wicked sailors carry you away?"

"Yes, my child," she answered, her lips shaking.

"And were you a little child like me, granny?"

"I was a bigger child than you; woe is me!" said the old woman. She strove to hold back the agony from her voice, but it quivered in her words, and shook her trembling lips.

The child looked at her with earnest eyes; then he came to her side, and slid his little hand softly into hers.

"Granny," he said, "we will forget it together."

When she felt the clasp of those tiny fingers, soft and warm, holding her wicked hand, she trembled, and cried out that God was too good to her, evil as she had been all her life! Then the child, to comfort her, smoothed her cheek with caressing touch, and whispered: "You'll be good now, granny, and God will forgive you."

He was too young to know what evil was, and he had no loathing for her sin, her age, or her withered ugliness: tender and caressing and forgiving to all, like the angel by the stream who had laid his hand upon her head.

Telling her in baby-words that he would have her for a mother, because his own mother was so far away, he climbed on her knee and showed her his swelled foot, asking her to "make it well."

With heart that melted from tears to smiles she listened, and carefully bathed and bandaged the little foot; then took him in her arms again, he prattling all the while; first, of the sea-fight, showing her, with great round eyes full of terror, and tiny hands outspread, how the men had fought; then, changing to a sad tone, he said his father had fought too and died. After this, a moment's silence, like a shadow, touched his lips; but remembering his little sister at home, and the pretty white rabbit she had promised to tend in his absence, he laughed again, and said he would soon go back to France to see her, and take old granny with him.

Thus talking he fell asleep, and she laid him gently on the bed of leaves and watched him as he slept. The moonlight, as it gleamed between the honeysuckle branches, made the child look pale, and then she sighed, but the crackling fire as it rose and fell on the rude hearth lent a ruddy glow to his fair cheek, and, seeing this, she smiled.

II.

All that summer-time the child and the old woman went hand-in-hand through the wood. He soon got to know where the birds sang the merriest, where the flowers grew the brightest, and he laughed joyfully as he made "granny" reach him down the high branches of honeysuckle and wild clematis which hung from many a tall tree. They took home such big bunches of flowers every night that the cave was gay with them as a fairy bower. And in remembrance of the French rabbit he soon had a little English one, for which the old woman never forgot to gather the fresh leaves it liked.

By her own labour, too, in collecting wood for the peasants and herbs for the sick she earned enough to buy a goat, and all its milk was for the child. The coarsest food had served for her, but now she made a rude oven in the rock to bake him better bread than the rough people round could give. And she spun and knitted for him for hours as he played on the sands and she sat on the rocks near by. The beach was his favourite spot, and the two miles were only a play when she carried him.

And so the summer passed away, and the autumn also with its rich berries, its wild fruits and showers of hazel nuts, and then the winter came. And the child was still the little bird of her dwelling, singing in the snow as he had sung in the sunshine. He went everywhere with her, in her long walks to fetch meal to bake and wool to spin; sometimes sitting on her shoulder or held in her arms, and sometimes running by her side, and always bright with happiness.

He saw a thousand things the old woman had never seen before. A new bright flower, a curiously twisted leaf, a shining pebble, or a broken shell; but whatever it was that his earnest eyes fastened on in

such eager wonder he would have it, whether it were high up on some thorny bank, or deep below on the rocks and shingle. Those little nimble feet surmounted all difficulties, and the swift hands—which made the old woman laugh, they were so small—seized the treasure and held it fast, while with curious looks he seemed to search for the secret hidden in it.

With eyes that smiled, the old woman watched him; and in places he could not reach, she put her basket down and went for him: often over the sharp jutting rocks, where some pebble glistened in the sun, while he, with little hand outstretched, pointed anxiously, his childish voice crying in eager accents, "There! dear granny, there! that's it—the shining one!"

Alas! she could not bring the sunshine with it, and when the stone lay dull and dark in his tiny palm, his blue eyes fell on it wistfully, and he would ask where all the glory was gone.

Pointing upwards to the sun, she would tell how he had lent some of his brightness to it for a time, making a worthless pebble seem a gem. And the child, turning and twisting it within his rosy fingers, would gaze upwards at the dazzling sun, and again at the dull stone, with looks of awe and wonder.

The summer came again, and the old woman thought the child must now be five years old, and should be stronger than he was last year; but it was not so. He no longer laughed so merrily when she shook down the June roses on him, or threw the honeysuckles into his lap; and on the shore, instead of building his mimic forts and castles he would come and rest his head upon her knee, and gaze with fixed eyes over the blue waters.

She knitted faster; she would not notice this for a long while: he would play the better to-morrow, she told herself. But the morrow never came.

"Why look over the sea so earnestly, my child?" she asked at last, and she made her voice quite gay and young.

"France is there, and my little sister," he said, shading his eyes with his hand to gaze out further still. "I should like, granny—I should dearly like to see them again before I die."

She caught him up in her arms and hurried away, but she saw that his blue eyes looked steadfastly at the sea till the tall hedges and trees hid it from his sight; then, with a strange deep sigh, he laid his head upon her shoulder and fell asleep.

He did not ask to go to the sea-shore again for a long, long while. Sometimes he would glance at her face wistfully, and then say:

"Never mind, granny, we will stay in the wood to-day."

When the autumn came he was very pale. "It is the heat," she said; and she carried him oftener than before. But when the winter came he was paler still, and then she said it was the cold; and she heaped wood on the red fire, and made his bed at the back of the cave, where the frosty air could not touch him.

At last the time came when she could deceive herself no more. The child lay on the yellow leaves, white and wasted, fast dying.

It was an agony to her to be compelled to leave him while she went to fetch needful food; but coming home she never forgot to gather the flowers he loved, and, bringing them to his bed, she would put them into the little wasted hand held out for them.

One day in February she was on her knees in the wood, searching among leaves anxiously, when two of the outlaws passed.

"Are you grubbing up roots there, Mother Beelzebub?" asked one

How she would have cursed him once; but now she answered mildly that she was only looking for violets.

"Violets!" cried the robber, with a loud laugh.

"Hush!" whispered the other. "'Tis for the sick child. I saw some in bloom yesterday. Yonder mother," he said, "round the old ash root." He pointed to the place, and, thanking him, she went to gather them.

When she put them in the child's hand he was so pale, and his face wore a look so sweet and strange, that she fell by his side in terror and anguish, believing he was dying.

As she lay breathless she felt his arms twined round her neck, and she heard his tender voice saying:

"Granny, do you think Jesus is coming for me?"

"Not yet, my child! not yet! I cannot bear it!" she cried.

"Granny, I have told Jesus in my prayers that I cannot die here, and He whispers back that the angels shall come for me when I am in France."

That night, whenever the child opened his weary eyes, he saw her sitting by the fire swaying herself to and fro, with that look, like the steady shadow of a rock, resting on her still. If he moaned, or moved, or asked for water, she came with swift soft steps to his bed, and, kneeling by his side, soothed and comforted him; but when he was silent or seemed to sleep she went back to her seat by the fire and rocked herself to and fro, with that look growing white and steadfast on her face.

Towards morning he fell asleep, and waking with the thought of something strange about him, he saw the wintry sunshine paling the fire, her place empty, and the hermit standing by his bedside. All that day the good man watched by him, and the next likewise, but in the evening his granny returned footsore, and weary, and falling on his bed she clasped him tightly in her arms, crying out:

"Oh, my child! my child! you will get well now, for you will soon see France!"

With flushed cheek and eyes bewildered he started up, and listened with parted lips while she told him she had found a good ship bound for France, going to sail in April, and she had taken passage in it, and would bring him safely to his mother.

She did not breathe a word of the bitter truth that in giving him

up she yielded her life; far less did she think of telling that she had spent for their passage all the money, saved through long years of pain, to pay for masses for her soul.

The child heard her glad tidings with a happy flush upon his face, and clapping his little hands he laughed aloud—she had not heard him laugh through all the dreary winter—then he talked fast and feverishly of home, and so talking fell asleep.

Round one of her bony fingers was twined the clasp of his tiny wasted ones, and she would not free her hand from that loving touch; she sat looking on him, her face quivering at times, but when he awoke she smiled.

No need to tell him to be brave and get well. Day by day he grew better, and soon could sit up and peer about the cave for pretty things to play with, and ask a hundred questions in a day. By and by she brought him news of the first bird's nest she had found, and he would be dressed and go himself to see it, and he made her lift him up twenty times to look at the shining eggs. Soon the cave grew bright again with spring flowers, snowdrops, wood anemones, lilies, and daffodils yellower than gold.

He was still too weak to go far, so he played by the brook side, where she had seen his angel, and she sat under the rock spinning. But she often let her wheel rest while she watched him with aching eyes that were ever saying farewell. She did not always know when her wheel was idle, and sometimes the child would come and smooth her aged hands, and say: "Is granny too tired to spin?"

Then, with a start, she worked again, and heard the sound of the sea, and saw the ship beckoning, and France—which was home no more—awaiting her like a grave.

All his talk day by day was of home, and his dear mother, and the little sister who had promised to tend his rabbit. When night came, and he lay on his bed of leaves, he would peer above the coverlet and say:

"Granny, are we another day nearer France? How many days more is it *now*, granny?"

Then she would tell him, and, choking back her grief, kiss his pretty face and turn away. So April came, full of sweet scents and flowers, and the days were counted on his little hands. First on both, then on one, and lo! the very day was here!

He was a little silent, a little awe-struck when they started—not full of joy, as she had thought he would be; and as she carried him through the wood, she felt the tight cling of small arms about her neck, and many a kiss fell upon her withered cheek. She carried him all the way to the sea-port, and he slept in her arms through the voyage.

When he first came to the cave he remembered the name of the town whence his father's ship had sailed, and she had treasured it in her memory; but they did not land at this place. So now they had

many weary leagues to traverse, and it was bright June before they neared his home. She begged her way on, and they wanted for nothing on the road, for his beauty moved all hearts.

When they got close, quite close to his home, his poor granny walked very fast and eagerly, as if there were some fierce struggle in her heart and she feared the evil would conquer.

Once in the town, the little Gabriel's house was soon found, for it was the best there, with a bright garden, and windows covered with twining flowers. All the people knew the story of his father's ship having been captured by the English; and a seafaring man who had sailed at times with the Norman captain recognised the child with a great shout of joy and wonder. A crowd soon gathered round him and the woman—a crowd of wild, excited, happy people, who brought them to the mother's door.

And now his little sister ran out, crying "Gabriel! Gabriel!" and fell on his neck with many tears; and his mother stood fainting by, kneeling to thank God, and kneeling again to thank the old woman. Then, clasping her child in her arms, speechless and sobbing, forgetting all things but him, she went into her house, followed by her weeping friends.

"And his dear father died defending him!" cried some.

"Ah! the cruel English!" cried others.

All was passionate exclamation, wonder, joy, and clamour. Many minutes passed before they missed the woman who had brought them all this happiness. She was gone! She was already a weary mile on her way. How could she stay there to see him taken by another?

She never knew how pale his little face was as he clasped his hands and called to her in piteous words to come back: she never knew how he cried for her that night till his own weary sobbings sent him to sleep.

She was lying then in the shadow of a great elm-tree, looking up at the silent stars, and murmuring, "It is enough now, O Lord!"

I cannot tell you of her weary journey home, because I should weep. She had not the heart to beg now, so she was in want often. And every spot reminded her of him. Here he was tired and she had put him to sleep on the soft grass, and sat, like Hagar, over against him, watching him. There he had played by the road-side, binding up the flowers she had gathered, and laughing as he put them against her withered cheek "to make his granny pretty." And here was the bank where he had sat eating his dinner so merrily, while she fetched him fresh water from the brook. Oh! how cold and dark the road was without him! Everything was dead.

She got home at last, she knew not how, to the old cave, and began the old life again. But often when she went out for roots she forgot to dig for them, and gathered flowers instead, and brought them home and laid them on the dead leaves where the child had slept. In her wanderings, too, she would stop to pick up a shining

pebble, a crimson leaf glittering with dew, or a bright feather dropped from a bird's wing, forgetting she could not give them to him now. She laid them all on the little bed till he should "come back." The brown rug the kind nuns had given him was there still. She would not take it, even when the weather was at the coldest. At night, as she sat by her fire, she watched for his laughing face to peep from under it, and she listened to hear his rosy lips cry "Granny! granny!" Of an evening, in the old days, he would do this twenty times; and in her loneliness she still heard the childish voice crying "Granny! granny!"

But sometimes the little couch of yellow leaves looked dead, and she would fancy he was lying there covered up, but cold; then she would tremble very much and cry a little—the sad, spare tears that only aged eyes know.

And thus the autumn and the winter glided away. She was a worn woman now, minding herself so little that I think she must have starved, if the good hermit and the nuns had not helped her.

She never forgot to lay flowers on the child's bed, though she so often forgot her own roots and berries. Every night she knelt by the withered leaves to pray, and when she rose from her knees she always said, "God will let me see him again."

One day in the early spring, just as the snowdrops were peeping from the earth, a strange sailor came to her cave. He had spoken with a French ship at sea, and had promised the captain he would find her, and deliver a message from France. Little Gabriel was dead; and, in dying, he sent a tender word to her to say he dearly loved old granny, and he should see her again in heaven. Well, she answered, she had known it long ago: she had always known he would die. That night, when she hid her face in the withered leaves, she altered not a word of her prayer, and on rising she said, as usual, "God will let me see him again."

A few days after this, the hermit, coming to the cave, found her on her knees by the child's bed, a little bunch of white violets in her hand. He touched her: she was quite dead.

The priests said no masses for her soul, because all her money was spent in the voyage to France; but I think she saw little Gabriel again in heaven.

There, too, must we look for the meaning of these two lives—one so long, so sinful, and weary; the other so short, so innocent, and beautiful; yet both ending in love, which saves, unites, and lives for ever. God be praised!

THE REUSS HOUSE.

By Mrs. Jerome Mercier.

A PLAIN woman and a pink cotton handkerchief are not the most promising materials for a picture. But Mary Cromford, though plain, had a graceful figure, and the pink handkerchief which she was hemming formed a pretty contrast to her white dress as she sat on the edge of a little chasm in a Swiss valley. The chasm was formed by a gushing, foaming brook: the wooden bridge and part of the road had been torn away by an avalanche; the blackened snow lay in masses across the water, and some dozen of workmen were busy below with pickaxe and spade to renew that which the white monster had devoured. Mary looked up from her work to watch them from time to time. The shade of the fir-trees lay about her. Yellow foxgloves rang their silent bells by her side, and the gentian, like a spot dropped from the profoundest heaven, dotted the turf on which she sat. She was a healthy, sweet, graceful English girl, and she and her bit of pink cotton formed no unworthy centre to the scene of hill and dale.

Fräulein Müller, her former governess, sat beside her. The stiff, tight dress, the hair primly laid over the ears, the broad hat tied with a big bow under the chin, bespoke her nationality.

"Louise," said Miss Cromford, suddenly, "I finished *La Croix de Berny* this morning."

"So?" responded the Fräulein.

"Have you read it?"

"No: I do not read French novels."

"It is proper enough, you know, and very clever. It is written by four people: Madame de Girardin, Théophile Gautier, Jules Sandeau, and Méry."

"So?" said Fräulein again, in the tone of one who did not care to pursue the subject.

"Yes, *so*, and *so*. I am going to tell you the story: it is very silly and very interesting. The heroine is an heiress who is engaged to a prince, but she does not know her own mind, and thinks the prince is not her ideal after all. So she runs away in disguise as a shabby-genteel sort of young person, and falls in the way of another lover, very wild and eccentric and poetical, to whom she rather inclines, while the poor prince is rushing hither and thither after her. At last, however, she really does meet her ideal, a mild sort of beneficent young man, and marries him before the other two know what is going on. Then, of course, they challenge the husband and kill him, the girl dies of a broken heart on the spot, the two rejected ones are

visited by remorse, and there is an end of them all, neater than Hamlet."

Fräulein had laid down her knitting, forgotten her prejudices, and was listening with absorption.

"How sad!" she said, "and, my dear, how like you!"

Mary laughed slightly: she had a pleasant, honest laugh.

"Well, I fancied there were some points about it like me, and to tell the truth, I felt ashamed to have made myself into a sort of French novel. But then there are great differences; I am not engaged."

"But you will be—you will be! That handsome Mr. Manton," cried Fräulein, in an ineffable tone, scratching her head elegantly with a knitting-pin in her emotion.

"That handsome Mr. Manton is not my ideal, unfortunately," answered the girl, with rather a constrained laugh. "Hark!"

A distant sound as of a little brook running down over its stones from a mountain height.

"The goats are coming to be milked: let us go to the little level and see them."

The two ascended the stream till they reached an open space of turf strewn with huge boulders. To this spot the goats were running down the slopes in a herd of some two hundred, their little bells had made that brook-like tinkling sound. The leader stopped at sight of the strangers, looking shrewdly and suspiciously at them, nor would he give the sign of command to advance until they were hidden behind a stone. Then the quaint creatures came on, dividing as they came into little bands, each around its own particular possessor, among the women who stood awaiting them with their wooden pails. When they were assembled, the women took from their aprons each a bag of salt, and gave to every goat the treat of a lick with its nose inside that beloved bag. Then began the milking. It was pretty to see the little groups of goats lying down and chewing the cud at their ease, their slow Satyrine jaws grinding one upon another. Only the one goat, whose turn would come next, stood always behind her mistress, caressing her shoulder gently with head and horns. Some "kidlings blithe and merry," whose milking-days had not yet come, skipped about upon the stones, and had little struggles for the envied position on the summit, where it seemed to be the desire of each to make itself as like as possible to the little goats carved in wood, which everyone brings home from Switzerland.

A pretty but very dirty little girl had helped to drive the goats from the mountains, and was now helping, or pretending to help, in the milking. Mary called the girl.

"My child," she said, in German, "do you like this handkerchief?"

The twinkling eyes replied.

"Will you wash your face and comb your hair every day if I give you this to wear on your head?"

"*Jo*," answered the girl, in the German-Swiss manner.

The bargain was struck.

"I shall come sometimes and see that you have kept your promise. That will be an act of charity indeed if I can make one of them cleaner," said Miss Cromford. "Shall we go now, Louise? It is nearly dinner time."

So they went down the little turfy, stony paths, poor Fräulein sighing and groaning and tripping as she went, and Mary Cromford thinking neither of the goats nor the sighs, but of something or someone far away. At a sudden turn they came in sight of the little village where, for the time, they had their home, and of the mountains and the gorge beyond it. Mary awoke suddenly from her dream and raised her hand.

"Oh, look! how glorious!" she cried. Forth from the mouth of the dark and awful gorge were streaming wreaths of cloud, full and white and dense, streaming up, up, and clothing all the grand green slopes and grey jagged peaks beside the gorge in garments of vestal beauty and regal richness. It was a noble and an awful sight.

"Ach Himmel!" suddenly shrieked Fräulein, and rushed from Mary's side down the path. It was not the spectacle of the clouds which drew that shriek from her, but the sight of an unkempt, untidy child which had climbed to the top of a cartload of wood, and at some movement of the horse had fallen to the ground and was lying there screaming, but probably rather frightened than hurt. When Mary appeared on the spot, Fräulein was kissing and soothing the dirty little mite, and offering it bon-bons from a private box which she always carried, and of which she said the contents were good for the nerves. The bon-bons were received more cordially than the kisses. The tears soon ceased, and the small person trotted along by Fräulein's side with an occasional sob, the subsidence of the storm, and a continual contented sucking at the bon-bons, like a chewing of the cud.

"It is one of that poor doctor's children," said Fräulein, indignantly. "Oh, that wicked old woman, to neglect the poor creatures so! I will leave the child at the house and tell her what I think of it."

Mary smiled a quiet and significant smile, and walked silently beside her indignant companion till they reached the centre of the village. There an old lichen-covered bridge spanned a torrent, beside which stood a dilapidated house that had seen better days. The richly-wrought iron knocker, which would make the joy of Eastlake, the carvings and half-obliterated painting above the windows, the texts, also half obliterated, running along every story, bespoke the reverence with which one regards a dignified but faded beauty.

Mary Cromford seated herself on the stones of the bridge, looking down, still with her amused smile, into the dashing stream below, admiring its inimitable colour, like a mass of jade half covered by a pile of lace.

Meanwhile Fräulein, concealing a certain nervousness under the appearance of great valour, dashed at the ancient knocker with a loud peal. It had to be repeated before "that wicked old woman"—old, certainly, whatever her title to the other epithet—appeared with a frowning countenance, and received the child and the oration, which were simultaneously delivered, with a stolid silence. Fräulein was still bubbling over with small ejaculations, like a kettle going off the boil, when the two ladies entered their hotel. It was precisely opposite to the bridge and to the old house, the Reuss House as it was called, taking its name from the stream beside which it stood. A cleanly-painted little inn of two stories, with geraniums and pinks in the window. Mary had added one little prettiness or comfort after another until her parlour was an abiding-place of no mean attractions, cool, clean, and home-like. But Mary sighed as she entered it. And why? Because it was an exile to her, a prison, though a self-chosen one. She was not happy, for half her being was in England; she was in love, and like Irène in *La Croix de Berny*, she had run away from her lover.

Mary's position was a difficult one. Adopted when a child by a distant relative, a rich bachelor, she had been recognised as his daughter, and though the fine old house where they dwelt, with its park and surrounding land, were entailed on a male heir, it was known that that heir had offended the old man, and no one was surprised when, on his sudden death, the only will, dated many years back, was found to leave to Mary Cromford the whole of her benefactor's personal property, which, by every means, he had taken care to increase at the expense of the estate. No one was surprised except the heir, Mr. Manton, a handsome, stern, proud man of over forty years, whose grave dignity sat well upon him, and whose very anger was dignified as he stated his strong sense of injustice. He was a poor man; and he found himself suddenly master of a handsome estate, requiring instant outlay and a handsome income to keep it from absolute deterioration. If his uncle had felt no regard or consideration for him, at least he might have respected the land itself. The lawyers shook their heads. It might not seem equitable, but—*c'est comme ça.* There was no help for it. No help for it? Mr. Manton thought otherwise. Having made Mary's acquaintance in the necessary intercourse of business, he one day demanded a private interview, and with the utmost candour told her that she alone could remedy the evil and save the estate by—marrying him: that he had a high esteem for her qualities, that his affections were entirely at her disposal, and that he would make her a good husband. Mary doubted none of these propositions: Mr. Manton's somewhat naïf candour had its attractions for her, and, like all noble women, she was infinitely attracted by the idea of a self-sacrifice for the sake of justice. But this self-sacrifice was a trifle too hard, for was there not Tom Derby, whom she had loved for years, and who loved her well?

She *thought* he loved her, but there was the pinch; for her uncle, with an old man's wisdom, had impressed upon her, with the continual droppings which wear away the stone, that men seek money, that it was known she would have money, and that, therefore, it behoved her to look to it, lest those who sought her hand should be rather seeking her purse. And when Tom Derby had come too often, or lingered too long, he had thrown out hints that Derby was poor—that he expected—that he hoped—and so on, till the poison had eaten into her soul. And yet her nature was so frank, so antagonistic to suspicion; but she was blindfolded by that blind guide, the worldly wisdom of old age. Therefore, when she stood alone, when Mr. Manton candidly asked her to sacrifice herself for him, his very frankness and coolness tempted her to yield; for, she said, was it not better to take a cold esteem, honestly offered, than a love which might be only——? No, she could not frame the word even to herself. When she ought to have given an answer, her whole inner being rose up against the falsehood, and she found herself in a great strait.

"Was there no other way?" she piteously asked Mr. Manton. "Was there not such a thing as a deed of gift? Might she not return to him so much of her fatal legacy as should remove the stain of injustice?" No; Mr. Manton's dignity forbade him to receive the lesser boon—it must be all or nothing. Then, while she still hesitated, she had a letter from Tom Derby; he was coming to see her; he begged her to receive him on such a day; and, like Irène de Châteaudine, driven to a decision, she avoided it by running away. She would see what time and absence would do to help her to settle her mind.

Some of these things were revolving in her thoughts as she absently played with her coffee and spoon, when a deep sigh from Fräulein made her look up. Fräulein was at the window, gazing out with a very sentimental expression. Mary joined her, and the amused smile again floated over her features as she saw a tall, ungainly figure, with short trousers, low shoes, much blue stocking, a large umbrella of green and white plaid, enormous spectacles, and a hat on the back of its head, yet withal with a kindly, and pleasing, and very melancholy face, come swinging over the bridge towards the Reuss House. He whistled as he drew near, a musical whistle like a bird's call; and his melancholy features broke into a sunny smile as the old door opened, and three dirty children—the capsized one among them—rushed out, clasping his knees and hands, and dancing like Hecate's imps about him as they led him in triumph home.

"There is an ideal—an ideal Don Quixote," said Mary.

Fräulein replied by a sounding "Ach!"

"Listen, Louise," said Mary Cromford, holding in her hand that morning's *Kurier*. "This is what your wicked old woman has driven our opposite neighbour to:—

"'Genuine Proposition of Marriage.

"'A widower, 45 years of age, a doctor, possessing a good house in an agreeable village of Switzerland, desires to marry a maiden or widow lady, of suitable age. The same must be of an amiable disposition, must have a taste for housekeeping and simplicity, and be willing to be a loving stepmother to his children, and to give them a sound and religious education. Fortune is less desired than a good disposition. Genuine offers, with photograph enclosed (no notice will be taken of anonymous answers), may be sent in strict confidence to "*Poste Restante*"'—where do you think? Why, here, in Neuenthal. It is no one but our doctor. Is this the way your German ideals manage matters?"

But Fräulein did not seem to see the joke. She was fidgeting over the bread and butter, and looked so red, when Mary glanced up laughing for her answer, that she checked the words, "Suppose we answer it," which were ready on her lips. No English person can guess at the cause of German emotion, and Mary, therefore, held her tongue, supposing that Fräulein's tenth cousin had answered a similar advertisement, or that some such recondite incident was awakening her inmost soul.

"Now to my letters," said Mary. "Here is one from Lizzie Arnold; one from ——"

Here it was her turn to be confused, for the second was from Mr. Manton. She supposed he had discovered her retreat, and was pressing, in his determined way, for an answer, and she had no answer ready. But little was she prepared for the real contents of his letter. Light and shade crossed one another on her face; some consternation, much bewilderment, a dawning sense of great relief, made confusion in her mind.

"Dear madam," said this strange lover, "knowing that you had retired in order to form a decision more freely, I would have taken no steps to discover your retreat till it should be your own will to disclose it, had I not been bound to do so by a singular and important discovery, of which I have fully informed your lawyers. You will hear from them by the next post; but, for obvious reasons, I have wished to be the first to communicate to you the fact that, in the course of certain alterations in Worthton Hall, a will of recent date has been found, drawn up in full legal form by my late uncle himself, and witnessed by two old servants, who were not aware of the importance of the document. The late Mr. Manton here explains that, notwithstanding a strong prejudice against myself, he feels the injustice of his former disposition of the property; and, for the sake of the estate itself, bequeaths to me, in addition to the house and land which were entailed and inalienable, so much of his personalty as shall amount to an annual income of seven thousand pounds. He adds that the remainder, amounting to an income of three thousand, bequeathed to you, will, he believes, equal your expectations and desires.

"You are now, by this newly-discovered will, set free, dear madam, from any claim on your sense of justice. May I hope that a more welcome feeling will point to the same end, if I beg you now, solely on the ground of my deep esteem and affection awakened by your merits, to return to Worthton Hall, and hold once more the position of mistress which you have formerly so ably filled there?

"I remain, dear madam,

"Your devoted servant,

"J. MANTON."

"So that's all over, and I am free again, and we can go home to-morrow," said Mary, when she had read the letter twice, tossing it over to her companion.

"How noble! how beautiful!" was Fräulein's comment. "This at least will win your heart."

"I am sorry to say it doesn't at all," answered Mary, "any more than I have won Mr. Manton's. He is a very upright gentleman, and I respect him as such, and there the matter ends."

"And you can lose seven thousand a year with a smile?"

"Seven thousand a year too much. A burden and a discomfort well got rid of."

Fräulein cast up her hands and eyes in dismay, but Mary was as light-hearted as a bird. The lawyer's letter came in due course, attesting the genuineness of the recent will; the letter of "declined with thanks" was despatched to Mr. Manton, and Mary began to think whether she should at once return to England, or, as it was the height of the summer, travel a little first, now that one burden at least was removed which had made travelling and all things else under the sun a weariness. But, to her surprise, it was Fräulein who now cast obstacles in the way. There was this reason and that reason why they could not possibly leave Neuenthal at once, and when Mary overruled them all, poor Fräulein waxed tearful and nervous, and had headaches, till Mary, perceiving some mysterious cause, promised to stay "a little longer" in the spot which she had almost begun to hate as a prison.

It was very wearisome to her, however; she was longing for a home, and rock and flood bore to her the aspect of gaolers. She had wandered alone one afternoon to the edge of that chasm where we saw her first. The new path was made; the workmen were all gone; there was silence but for the voice of the river. Fräulein was at home with the headache. Again Mary wore that same white dress in which her graceful figure showed so well, and the soft plaits of her brown hair were rich in shadow under her simple hat. A young pedestrian of the true British type, a sunny-haired, frank-eyed mortal, who came swinging down the river side, thought that he had never seen a picture more pleasing or more welcome to his eyes. She did not raise her head at his footstep, until he stood close behind her, stopped, and said, softly, "Mary."

She started and looked at him, trembling. In a sense of loneliness the tears had been ready before, and now they came brimming over. "Oh, Tom!" she cried. "How—how—how could you?"

There was no one to see how he soothed her, nor how glad he was to have her in his arms at last, nor (truth to tell) how glad she was to be there. But when the surprise and the crying were over, Mary felt that she was forsaking all her principles, and began to gather back some shadow of reserve.

"I was startled," she said. "You should not have come like that. I have given you no reason."

"Look here, Mary," said Tom Derby, in a straightforward, manly way that there was no withstanding, "I want to know what it is that has come between us. I knew letters would be of no use, so I came to find you at the first moment I had my holiday, just to ask that one question."

She looked in his face and blushed: she was ashamed of her wretched wisdom.

"I love you, and I do believe you love me, and what hinders us from being happy?"

No answer.

"I have been thinking and thinking day and night, and all I can think is this, Mary—that old Mr. Manton has put his old-world suspicions into you, and taught you to believe I was looking after your money. Was that it? Be honest and true with me, Mary."

"He used to say so, certainly," said Mary, bending her head low over a flower she was plucking to pieces. "He said it was the way of the world."

"It may be the way of the world, but it is not my way," he answered, earnestly; perhaps a trifle pained, but not offended. "Do you not know me better than that? I wish your money were at the bottom of the sea, if it is to stand between us. Money is a good thing in itself, but it is a confoundedly bad thing if it is to part two people who love one another."

The last dying spark of Mary's worldly wisdom shone out in her next speech.

"It cannot do that now, Tom. A new will has been found, and Mr. Manton has left his property to the heir after all, to keep up the estate."

"And you are as poor as a church mouse?"

She nodded. Tom threw his hat into the air.

"Hurrah! Then that is all right. You won't mind a snug cottage at Twickenham or somewhere, where we can be as happy as turtle-doves on my five hundred a-year? Heaven bless the old gentleman and his second will!"

Mary turned upon him beaming, yet thoroughly ashamed of herself. She felt a sense of rest and deliverance, and as they walked home at last, he talking blithely of that Twickenham cottage, she

reserved mention of her annual three thousand which still remained, that he might taste yet awhile all the sweets of his own generosity.

"Fräulein Müller will be very angry," said Mary, as they entered the inn. "She had a romantic adoration for Mr. Manton."

"Is that Fräulein's umbrella?" asked Tom, pointing to a bulgy object of green and white check which reposed outside the door.

Mary started. "It is the doctor's," she said, "I do believe. Will you please to stay outside a little while, Tom, and let me go in first?"

She made a grand commotion with the handle of the door, as if it had a way of wanting to be turned six times, and when she entered, lo! there stood the doctor and Fräulein, in all the consciousness of having been closer together. But the gentleman was equal to the occasion. Hardly waiting for Fräulein's nervous introduction, he began, solemnly bowing:

"This inestimable lady, Mees Cromford, has done me the honour to promise to become mistress of the Reuss House and a loving step-mother to ——"

"Oh, yes!" interrupted Mary, rather rudely; but then she was already flurried. "Do not trouble to explain; no doubt Fräulein answered the advertisement."

"I am proud to say she did," said the doctor.

"But oh! my dear," sobbed Fräulein, "I will never leave you while you want me."

"Very well, dear," answered Mary. "You don't know how glad I am. I am going home, for I have a doctor of my own outside."

And so the wicked old woman lost her situation at the Reuss House and the children were made clean.

CAPTIVE SPRING.

What, gentle Spring, and art thou come? Desire,
Under the iron sceptre of thy sire,
Cried out for thee.
Fair truant! couldst thou not have flown
More quickly to our colder zone,
From those beyond the sea?
Or didst thou linger on, and grieve
The sunny southern land to leave?
Cease for awhile thy wandering,
Rest and be welcome, gentle Spring.

Why, like a maid that would the more be sought,
Dost hide thee, almost ere thy beauty caught
Our eager view,
Behind yon cloud that frowning passed?
A laggard surely, and the last
Of winter's sullen crew.
He will not aid thee in thy wiles:
See, at thy touch the traitor smiles;
And thou, discovered once again,
Shalt find thy shyness all in vain.

Besides, an hour ago her fragrance sweet
Disclosed the violet springing at my feet;
And I knew well,
Gazing upon the purple gem,
From whose bright veil or diadem
That tiny treasure fell.
I spied the crocus lifting up
His yellow head, his golden cup;
The very daisies in the grass
Showed me the way that Spring did pass.

Yield, then, fair nymph! for, goddess as thou art,
We will not let thee from our shore depart
Until thou bless
The land that all expectant lies,
And every soul that longing sighs
To feel thy soft caress.
The waking bees, the happy birds,
The timid flocks, the patient herds,
Thy presence own with grateful joy,
And silent mourn if thou art coy.

From thy full hands we claim the daffodil,
And those bright bells the midnight fairies fill
With honey dew;
Pink blossom of the almond tree,
Tender laburnum hanging free,
And periwinkle blue.
Spare us those jewels from thy crown,
These buds that deck thy gauzy gown;
And stay thy flight, and fold thy wing—
We hold thee captive, gentle Spring.

SYDNEY GREY.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

J. SWAIN.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW JOEL WENT TO COVENT GARDEN.

BETWEEN ten and eleven one morning a cab rattled up the narrow street to the door of the Mission-house. Mr. Forrest, who was just returning home, stopped to welcome the new arrivals: Joel and Martin. They had found a message at the lodgings, telling them where Mr. Bruce was staying, but no other explanation had been given. With a friendly greeting, the clergyman ushered them into his parlour, and offered them refreshments, as he understood they had travelled all night. They had breakfasted, however, and only wanted to report themselves, and, as Martin emphatically observed, receive their master's orders.

"Well, one order I shall suggest will be to get rid of your other apartments; for here you will have to stay for the present, if you can put up with plain accommodation. We have spare beds here, and that is nearly all we can offer, besides a cut at the joint. But I daresay you have fared harder, sometimes, in the bush, or the diggings."

Without waiting for an answer, Mr. Forrest took them into a dormitory containing five or six narrow iron beds, and some plain deal furniture; and asked if that would do. "We are sometimes very full, but the rooms have just been under repair, and at present there is no one here but Mr. Bruce."

"I beg pardon, sir—when did he come?" asked Joel, uneasily.

"On Tuesday evening—or, rather, I brought him here. He met with a mysterious accident—if accident it was—though we have strong grounds for believing it was actually an assault."

The two men looked at him, and then at each other, and something like a groan burst from Martin's lips.

"Tell us all about it—every word!" he said, sitting down on one of the beds. "I knew something had happened—I felt it all night. Why did we both leave him?"

"He would have it," said Joel. "When he tells us to go, go we must, of course. What was it happened, sir?"

Mr. Forrest related the scene. At the description of the stranger, they exchanged glances again.

"That was not Wily Wilkins," said Martin.

"No, it was nobody we seem to know; and that shows us there is a gang at work, instead of one man. I thought he never could have given us the slip as he did without someone to back him."

The clergyman looked at them anxiously; and in return for his narrative, Joel told him of their two adventures on board the boat and in the hotel.

"You have good reasons for believing yourselves pursued by enemies, of course."

"Very good, sir, but it is not for us to explain them. Mr. Bruce must do that, if he pleases. Can we go to him?"

"Yes, I am thankful to say he is going on as well as possible; and if he meets with no drawbacks, will soon be about again. He has been talking of you both. You are Mr. Martin, I think, and this must be Joel Treherne."

"This *is* Joel Treherne," said Martin, rising; "and I am Erasmus Martin, at your service."

"Erasmus Martin? It is rather singular that I have an old parishioner of that name, which is by no means a common one. He is quite a character in his way. Perhaps I may persuade you to go with me and call upon him."

"I am only an ignorant hunter, brought up in the woods," said Martin; "I don't know anything about your town ways in England. No one will care for a visit from me."

"My old friend will, though, when he hears your name is like his own. Now come with me to Mr. Bruce, and I will trust to your discretion not to let him tire himself. His spirits are stronger than his body."

"Well for us that they were; they held us all up more than once. Has anything been done towards finding that fellow?"

"No; there was a policeman here last night from the railway company, asking me about him; but my evidence went for little, as I had only a moment's sight of the man altogether. Your master can give no account of what happened, and it would be impossible to convict anyone on such mere suspicion."

"Let me find him, that's all," muttered Joel, as they moved along the passage to Gabriel's room: where Mr. Forrest, after quietly reconnoitring, signed to them to enter, and left them to do so alone. He ran downstairs, and called to Mrs. Honest, but only Lucy obeyed the call, and received the orders to provide bed and board for the

two new comers; and as there would be extra meat cooked, to let one or two poor people in the district send round for a hot dinner. Lucy was up to her dimpled elbows in flour, having undertaken to make the Mission Priest his greatest luxury—a loaf or two of home-baked bread—when a soldierly step coming in at the kitchen-door made her look round, and in the tall figure that stood civilly saluting her she at once recognised one of the guests, for whose comfort she was responsible. So she begged him to come in and sit down, and apologised for being so busy; but she could not leave her bread now without spoiling it. Was there anything he wanted?

"Only to know the nearest way to Covent Garden Market, if you'll kindly tell me," said Joel, thinking how long it was since he had looked on so winsome a face, and unconsciously showing his thoughts in his eyes. Perhaps Lucy read their meaning, for she blushed much more than the question required, and could not at first recollect her localities. However, she quickly recovered her presence of mind, and gave him the direction, asking if he wanted a basket.

"I am only going after flowers; but they are to be the very best money can buy. Maybe a basket would not be amiss, if you will be so kind."

She pointed to a small one on the dresser, which was her own property, and told him he was welcome to that if he would bring it safely back. To which he replied, with a smile of thanks, that he should certainly do so, if only for the pleasure of returning it; and thereupon gallantly inquired her name, and told her his own, and went away leaving her a little fluttered in spirits by the novelty of the acquaintance, but decidedly preferring his appearance to that of anyone she had ever seen before. When Mrs. Honest came back to the kitchen, she told her who had been there, and asked who he was and where he came from: which the good woman could not tell—except that the sick gentleman had talked of his Cornish soldier-servant as the most faithful he had ever had.

"I am sure he looks so," said Lucy, eagerly.

"Aye, aye, my dear, no doubt he does; but it seems rather early days for you to be talking about his looks, when he was only, as you say, five minutes in the kitchen. Now, Lucy, I only just say this, that if Mr. Bruce's servant is to be in and out of the kitchen, I can't be always here to look after you, and I expect you to be steady—like your sister Grace. Do you hear?"

"I am always steady, Mrs. Honest"—with rather an angry flush. "I don't know what you mean."

"No, child—nobody ever does when advice of that sort is given; but mind what I tell you, all the same. There—don't be vexed with me, and spoil your bread."

Having ascertained Joel's errand, she calculated his return to a nicety, and contrived that her young assistant should, at that hour, be carrying her master's message about the hot dinner to some of

his needy flock: and with permission to run home afterwards and see her sister for half an hour—not longer.

"And if so be that Grace has a mind to take turn and turn about with you, my dear, I've no objection, for she's worth a dozen of you young ones, and I would trust her as I could my own self."

The prospect of a chat with Grace took the sting out of the last hint, and it was with a gay step Lucy climbed the staircase to their lodging, expecting to find her sister sewing, and the little bit of dinner either simmering in the stewpan or bubbling in the pot. Nay, it would have seemed natural if Grace had come to meet her at the door, and it was a great blank at first to find it fastened. Supposing that she had gone to carry home work, Lucy was just going away, disappointed, when the welcome voice called her from within, saying the door should be opened in a minute. It seemed rather a long one; and when Grace at last admitted her there was something hurried and anxious in her manner, as if she thought she ought not to have come. Lucy hastened to give the assurance that the half-hour had been freely given; and, in her turn, asked what was the matter that the door was kept locked.

"Nothing is the matter," said Grace, turning to the fire; where, as usual, her little stewpan was at work, "but one feels more to oneself when nobody can come prying in: as some like to do wherever a door is open. Mind you always keep it locked, dear, when you sit here alone. Will you like to stay and rest, or would you rather go out shopping?"

"I'll sit still, please—I've no time for shopping—and I care most for a look at you. It seems so queer not to see you to say good night; but I may have to stop there some time yet, unless you like to come for a bit instead of me. Honest says she will not object, as you are worth a dozen of me any day: which is very true, I daresay, but not over civil. There's no saying how long the poor gentleman will be in getting well; and now his two servants are come. I've only seen one of them, but he is enough at a time, for he is as big as a Life-guardsman, and I am sure he must have been a soldier some time or other. —Grace, is that the cat clattering about in there? I heard something in the closet."

"Pussy is here, dear," said Grace, stooping hastily to caress the accused cat, as if she would apologise for the injustice. "Go on with your story, unless you are in a hurry to be back."

"I am rather in a hurry, for I shall be wanted—but I must just tell you this. Do you know, they think it really was a robber who knocked Mr. Bruce down in a railway carriage, and that he tried to steal something he wears round his neck. You must not tell anybody this, as it is a secret. Honest saw the thing herself—a curious bit of hammered work, she says, like a small purse, fastened to a strong chain; and there are the dents and scratches, as if someone had tried to undo it with a knife."

"Have they any idea who the man was, Lucy?"

"No; Mr. Forrest saw a small, dark, sailor fellow in the carriage, but he could not swear to him. I heard him tell the policeman so, myself. There is the clock striking. Can't I take some of Miss Kerr's sewing away with me? I shall have time in the evenings. The fire is kept in very late for Mr. Forrest. He did not come in last night till past eleven, tired to death, and Honest says he would never ask for coffee or anything hot if she did not keep it ready. How is the old gentleman below, Grace?"

"I have not had time to see him to-day. Could you look in upon him for a minute? He would take it so kind."

"Well, it seems as if you would take it kinder still if I'd go, so I will. I've got a piece of news for him. Good-bye, dear. You'll let us know when you would like to come in my place."

"Yes, yes, my darling, I'll let you know;" and Grace, as she went with her into the passage, folded her to her heart with a warmth that amply atoned for her previous slackness of welcome. With a deep sigh she watched her down the stairs, and then, returning to her own room, again secured the door.

"It is all safe now, Darch; you can come out."

The door of the little inner room, which had only been pushed to, as it never would shut properly, was quickly thrust open, and Mr. Jones stepped out, in respectable working clothes, and carrying under his arm a small oilskin package of goods for sale—his ostensible reason for entering the house. Grace, having been taken by surprise, had reluctantly admitted him; and she told him now that, if secrecy were his object, he must not repeat the visit.

"You don't know—and yet you ought to—how hard it is for us poor women to keep a single thing we do or say from everybody's eyes and ears. It would set a dozen tongues chattering if they thought I had anyone here that I didn't want to be seen. I've had a long fight, Darch, to keep my head and Lucy's above water; and it was always a help in holding on, to think we wouldn't shame you when you came back; so don't you make it harder now you are come, Darch."

"No, my dear, I promise I won't call again; but I'm right glad it so happened that I came to-day, and saw my pretty little sister that is to be. You won't fail me, Grace. You'll just trust to me that it's all right, and do what I ask you *because* I ask you."

"I'll do anything I can that I ought, Darch, and be right thankful to have the chance. I'd work, night as well as day, and think it all a pleasure; but it would be such a comfort if there was no secret about it."

"There shan't be a secret a minute longer than I can help. Now I've got a rich party at my back to be my bail and paymaster, I shall get on—only I must not run any risk just at first. I can prove, as clear as daylight, where I was, hundreds of leagues away, when old Oram's house was burnt: but it would spoil the game I have to

play, if I were to show myself too openly. The job, when done, will be the making of me, and I look to you to help me—without asking awkward questions. Do you hear?"

"Darch, I haven't asked any questions that I thought you'd not like to answer; but I do wish you would take some good friend's advice, and see if you couldn't go to work in a straightforward way, like an honest man."

"Perhaps you mean that kind gentleman your sister was talking about—a parson, isn't he? Much too fine, I'll be bound, to care about listening to a vagabond like me."

"Why, those are the very people he cares about most. Just you go to him and try. Now do. Or, if you'd rather, I will speak to him first; I may go and take Lucy's place in a day or two, and if I tell him I want his advice, he'll put down his book or his sermon, or whatever he's about, and attend to me directly."

"Well, that's civil, and I don't know but I might do worse. I'll wait till you are in the house, and then I may sum up my courage to ask his advice. Good-bye, Grace. I'll keep my promise, and you shan't be plagued on my account. I must take care not to run against that little sister of yours as I go down, or she'll be finding out that I was behind the door instead of the cat."

He had listened so keenly for Lucy's departure that he was able to time his own to a moment, and obtain a glimpse of her light figure as it turned the corner of the street, following just closely enough to perceive which house she entered.

The sight was new to him. The Mission-house, chapel, and school, had all been built or adapted within the last few years; and his own recollections of the locality were of quite a different nature. He walked slowly on the opposite side of the way, studying the design of the buildings, and speculating in his own mind as to which of the windows gave light to the sick-bed of Gabriel Bruce. A dark scowl passed over his face as he muttered a fierce ejaculation on the idiotcy of "Tonio," who had had such a chance in his hand, and lost it.

"The game may be ours yet; and shall be, with only decent luck," was his consolatory reflection, as he passed on. And for the present, we will leave him to pursue his way alone.

A little later, and he might have been observed, had he been loitering there; for Martin moved to the window to read a label, muttering some remarks by no means complimentary to the atmosphere of London. He had quietly assumed the position of head-nurse, and displayed one essential qualification for it—that of having his whole interest absorbed in the invalid's room. Indeed, it was comparative luxury, when he had convinced himself that Gabriel was not in danger, to hover about his bed, or sit by his side, telling him their adventures and discoveries, or listening to his account of all that had taken place meanwhile; and so lightly did Gabriel treat the assault, regarding it

much more as an escape than a disaster, that Martin's watchfulness was by degrees lulled to sleep. He began to think that after all it might only be a trifling hurt, and all would be well in a day or two.

And then—ah, that sketch on the mantelpiece, with the sweet serene face, so full of purity and noble resolution—what a pang it cost him to go and look at it admiringly, as he was told to do, and to hear that it was a sort of likeness—faint, distant, but still a likeness—of Edith Leicester—that formidable rival, who at a distance appeared so harmless, but who was now an unavoidable reality.

"Yes," he thought, "if she is like that, she is very handsome, and he can think of nothing but her face—as I think of his. And because she is his darling, I must lie down at her feet, too—not to be loved, but to be made useful. Well, I can't leave him yet for anybody, so to be useful must be my reward, I suppose.—What is the lady in the picture supposed to be doing, captain?"

"Don't you know the poem? Colonial libraries are not such howling deserts as to be ignorant of Scott's works."

"Libraries never grew in our clearings."

"Did you never read Walter Scott?"

"Never. Why should I?"

"Why should you? My dear fellow, it will take us many a long winter evening to answer that question. What do you think of the drawing?"

"I know nothing about that. Who did it?"

"You have heard of Kerr, our little friend's father—it was one of his last pieces. I am to give her seven hundred pounds for it."

"Seven hundred for *that?*"

"Yes—a fair price, as far as I could judge."

"Oh!" said Martin, and sat down, somewhat confounded.

The world of books and art was much more difficult to understand than anything he had encountered yet. A short silence followed, broken by a half-musing remark of Gabriel's.

"I wish I had been in time to know him."

"To know Miss Kerr's father?"

"No, Ironhand—yours."

Martin started. "What put that in your head just now?"

"Lying here, I suppose, and thinking of my own mother, and what she would have done to welcome *you*. I wish I had known your father, Erasmus—I feel sure I could have made him see some things in a brighter light. He must have been under some mistake—almost delusion. Was it not so, old fellow?"

"It is curious that you should speak of him just this particular day, when he has been haunting me for the last four-and-twenty hours."

"Anything down there that reminded you of him?"

"Yes. You see," said Martin, losing his reserve in presence of his friend's earnest sympathy, "his last illness was a long one, and

the dear man had awful nights, but would not let me sit up with him, or even sleep in his room. We had only two men in our service then, and they had a hut to themselves. Well, night after night, I used to hear him repeating something, of which sometimes I could only catch a sentence or two—at other times I made out more—indeed, he would occasionally go over one sentence half-a-dozen times—and it was this, or like it: 'Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. Amen.'"

"Ah!" said Gabriel, half raising himself to listen.

"Then yesterday—as I told you—we were marched into that church, whether we liked it or not; Joel was exactly like a dog ordered to keep to heel, and I went because he did. The service had been going on as usual, and I believe I was thinking more of the roof than anything else—I seemed to have seen it before in my dreams—when right over my head came pealing out those very words—that long roll of cursings—just what had harrowed up that poor dead brain till it was nearly mad. I could have jumped up and rushed out; only there stood old Joel as if on church parade, and I must have tumbled over his legs, and scared the congregation."

"But Martin, old fellow, if your father had trouble on his mind that took *that* shape, we may hope he found comfort too. There is plenty of it, as the service goes on."

"I know of no comfort *he* ever found—he was a miserable man, as I remember him—and yet, since I have been old enough to understand better, I have often thought he must have been wrong in his head. Something must have half-crazed him, to make him take to the bush in the way he did, and bring me up to be—what I am."

"It was a gentle madness, if it gave me my friend. It is quite plain to me that you are a gentleman born, Erasmus—and my hope is that you will some day feel it yourself."

"Can I forget what he told me—that I never *could* be a gentleman, because I could never name my own father without disgrace? What he did I cannot tell—or whether he only fancied it; but he kept me so much in the dark, that, when I first mixed among men and heard them talk, it was more like falling in with a strange tribe than one's own countrymen. I'm only fit for what I really can do—and I have your word, Mr. Bruce. As long as we are together, it will be as master and servant. And that will be, I hope, till death on my part, or marriage on yours."

Joel's return prevented any answer to this last speech, and Gabriel's attention was speedily absorbed in the exquisite bouquet displayed by his messenger. Nothing would satisfy him but he must have pen and ink forthwith, and indite a few lines to go with them. He sat up to write; and when once he had steadied his hand to begin, and he found himself addressing Edith, the current of thoughts rolled so rapidly he could hardly keep pace with them—much less force them back, or judge whether they were likely to be deemed extravagant.

Diffident as he might have been at another time, the fever in his blood made the words burn the paper, and he told more of his deep passionate attachment than he had thought anyone would ever know. His hand shook so, at last, that the writing was scarcely legible, and it was by a great effort that he folded and directed it; then sank back on his pillow, and did not move for some minutes.

Martin, secretly raging at the innocent cause of the mischief, administered what remedies he had, and sent Joel off to Greville Gardens, with imperative orders to bring back such a response as would quiet the alarmingly rapid pulse. The answer came back—a few lines only, for Edith had not time for more, but they were eloquent in their brevity—imploring him to be calm and prudent, for her sake, if not for his own. The effect was instantaneous; after reading and kissing the precious missive, Gabriel put it under his pillow, and settled himself with a quiet smile that took a load off Martin's heart—too anxious just then for jealousy.

"If she can do this for him," he thought, "I'll be her servant for life."

He had been preparing for some difficulties with regard to his own position, but soon found there were none to be overcome. The dinner was served in a long, low room, furnished only with benches and tables—one large table in the middle, and a smaller one at the end as sideboard. The room would have accommodated a considerable number, but the party that day consisted, besides Mr. Forrest himself, of Martin and Joel, three sickly-looking boys, an old soldier with a wooden leg, and a young man who seemed to be helping the curate in all sorts of ways, and took his share of the carving. Mrs. Honest and Lucy, with Sally as page, waited at table, and carried away plates of hot meat and vegetables to be sent to invalids. Mr. Forrest presided, carved with ready hospitality, and encouraged cheerful talk among his guests. Lucy showed herself a first-rate parlour-maid, and Joel's eyes followed her admiringly, whenever they could without offence. He had got a little bunch of violets cleverly tucked away in one of his pockets, and was only waiting for a good opportunity to present them. But no opportunity had yet been given him, and somehow it seemed as if Mrs. Honest was always looking his way. Whenever he was to be served with anything, she either brought it herself or sent the child Sally; to whom the contemplation of his face appeared to afford intense rapture by the way she stared across the dish of potatoes. He began to feel something like hatred towards both; and watching Sally in return, while meditating counter manœuvres, had the pleasure of seeing her stop in the doorway, as she was carrying out a plate of invalid's pudding, to help herself to a mouthful with her finger and thumb. The pudding being hotter than she bargained for, the process of swallowing was more pain than pleasure. However, the practised little plunderer concealed her discomfiture, and came back the picture of innocence, to hand plates as

before. Directly she approached Joel, to her horror and surprise, he imitated her action in pantomime. She stood stock still, with her mouth open.

"Was it good?" he asked, grimly.

She waited for no more; threw down the plate she was carrying, and rushed off to the kitchen. In the confusion that ensued, Lucy quietly attended to his wants; and an amused twinkle in her eyes, when they met his, showed she had seen as much as he had. Satisfied with his revenge for the present, the Cornishman bided his time, talked about India to his neighbour, the old soldier, made the boys laugh with some of his replies to Mr. Forrest's questions, and contrived to utter a few observations for Lucy to hear, such as he flattered himself might give her a favourable notion of his way of thinking.

Time was too precious to admit of sitting long over meals; and when grace had been said, and the boys were gone to play till school-time, the corporal to smoke his pipe in the yard, and Mr. Forrest's friend to practice the organ in the chapel, the curate observed to Martin that it was comparatively a leisure time with them just then—the dormitories not being occupied; but that sometimes it was no joke to carve, when the table was full.

"A rise in provisions, or a slackness of work, will always send us extra guests; and, if you are here, I shall book you to help. I'll be bound you have as often cut up your game as shot it."

Martin admitted the fact, and was beginning to express his hope of being allowed to be useful, when his host interrupted him with the remark that his hunting experiences would be almost dangerously amusing to his London lads. Nothing won their hearts like a tale of sport and adventure—the more unlike their everyday life, the better.

"They would exchange all my schooling for yours, and need no bell to ring them into the class, I am sure of that."

"They don't know when they are well off, then," said Martin; "I'd give something to have their chance."

"You would? Then we'll strike a bargain. Tell me what you would like to learn, and I'll find you a teacher—and take it out of you in stories for my night-school. Where's your friend Treherne? I must have him, too. I suppose he is gone with the corporal to smoke the pipe of peace; but I did not see him leave the room."

"I did," said Martin, drily.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS LEICESTER GOES INTO LODGINGS.

"I AM coming to a mournful conviction," said Hartley Carroll to his wife. She was writing some notes when he entered, and, at the solemnity of his tone, looked up with her pen in her hand.

"What is the dismal fact?"

"That I am not the clever man you think me."

"Not so clever as *I* think you? That is serious. What has brought you down so low?"

"My inability to fathom Strahan. Deeper than ever plummet sounded have I gone, and cannot reach the bottom of his intentions. Being fully prepared for unpleasantness, whether in arranging affairs or in chatting over our wine, it is most alarming to meet nothing but cordiality; and if your wisdom can explain what it all means, Tiny, I shall be grateful."

"It means, I suppose, as Edith says, that he is gentleman enough to perceive his attentions would be unwelcome, but is too kind-hearted to let Alice Kerr suffer for what is not her fault; so he has been showing her his gallery, and lending her his portfolio of studies, out of pure good-nature."

"Do you believe that?"

"I am afraid I don't, Hartley. My own notion is that his pride will not let him appear annoyed, and that he wishes it to be supposed he never meant to go any further."

"That may be; but I also know that he never in his life gave up anything he tried for without a hard fight—and never forgave anyone who positively stood in his way; so I cannot rely either on his gentlemanly good feeling or his pride. I wish poor Bruce would make haste and get well."

"I wish he would; but he does not get on as we hoped. That one day that his lawyer was with him, settling his affairs, cost him his night's rest, which was not much to lose, by all accounts. By the way, here is his cheque for Alice, which I told her you would take care of, and invest to the best advantage. You must let her have some of it to spend, and employ the rest. I had some difficulty in persuading her to give it up. She wanted to buy presents for us all."

Hartley Carroll took the cheque, and held it in his fingers irresolutely. He seemed on the point of saying something which refused to be uttered, when the door opened quickly, and Edith came in, looking pale and agitated.

"Read that, Clare. I am going this instant."

"Going where, my dear?" asked Hartley, placing a chair in her way, for she seemed hardly able to stand.

"To him—he is worse—he wants me—he cannot imagine why I do not go. Ellis will go with me. I have sent for a cab."

Tiny had glanced over the note, and took the whole matter in directly.

"You shall have the carriage, dear; it will be round by the time you are ready, and Hartley will go with you, as well as Ellis, if you like. And you can send the carriage on for any physician they may wish to call in, or for any comforts that may be required. Poor dear fellow! I had no idea of this."

Edith could make no answer, but she pressed her sister's hand and went away to prepare for what she had been resolving upon for several days past. Hartley hastily put the cheque into his pocket-book, and deferred for the present what he had meant to say. He really was sufficiently attached to his sister-in-law to sympathise heartily in her anxieties, and could think of nothing else for the moment. Tiny waited till they had driven off, finished her notes, and then repaired to a room upstairs: which, being favoured with a north light, and a good little fire-place, had been given up to Alice Kerr as a studio.

Sooth to tell, there was very little of the artist in Alice's soul that afternoon. In compliance with Sir Jesse's practical advice, she had begun a course of study from models and casts to improve her drawing; and, after the first novelty, had found it decidedly dull. That she had a genius for portrait-painting, no one could deny; but whether she would ever have perseverance and application enough to excel, remained to be proved. At present she was unsettled, restless, and desultory over everything she touched: craving further excitement, dreaming over her castles in the air, instead of the work before her; and finding herself perpetually reproducing, with pen, crayon, or camel-hair pencil, the features of the kind, handsome face which had been the sunbeam of her darkest hour.

There was no harm in this, she was sure; she had a right to think gratefully and affectionately of so kind a friend. He belonged to Edith, and she was ready to lay down her life for them both. She should never see anybody to compare with Mr. Bruce, no, not though she lived to be a hundred—still, nobody need ever know what her opinion was.

"If I must be Nydia, I must," she thought, rather discontentedly, when honesty would be listened to, and she had to face the fact she would fain ignore, "but unluckily I can't be blind, and I can't help seeing him. And it is too silly of me to want the moon, or the 'bright particular star;' when, if it were not for Edith and Clare, I should be in a garret with a tallow candle at this minute. How *do* people get over these things? Can one help caring for a person, I wonder? I don't feel as if I should die of it, like Elaine; but I do know I would do anything to please him—go anywhere to see him—and bear anything to do him good. I should not mind Edith knowing that. And some day, when I am a famous artist, it will be found out that there was a romance in my early history, I suppose, and that the face which appears so often in my good compositions, was his."

And so musing, she began upon the "Knight, Squire, and Yeoman," as well as she could from memory. Over this she grew very happy, till the clock struck, and Mrs. Carroll came in.

"I am sorry Hartley cannot take us out, Alice," she said, kindly. "He came home on purpose, but he was obliged to go off into the city with Edith. Yes"— as Alice's startled eyes spoke the inquiry she could not utter, "she was sent for. Mr. Bruce has been suffering

from a half delirious fancy that something had happened to her which they were keeping from him. The doctor said she must be fetched at once. But don't cry, my child; it does not follow that he won't get well again; they think a good deal of the suffering is owing to his having had a blow on the same place in Australia—a falling branch of a tree struck him off his horse once, and he was then insensible for two days. There, put up your drawing now, and come downstairs with me."

How the afternoon passed Alice hardly knew. Visitors came and went; Miss Ford came and did not go, but sat silent in an arm-chair for a long time, or spoke only in short sentences. It was growing dark when Edith returned; her cheeks, which had been so pale, were flushed, and though her swollen eyelids betrayed the tears she had shed, her eyes were steadfast and almost cheerful. A few words exchanged with her sister made Tiny smile, but rather dolefully, and her shrug of resignation had some touch of petulance too. Alice herself could hardly say a word on the subject, but as Miss Leicester, with brief apology, left the room, she rushed after her.

"My dear child, I am sorry to run away from you like this," said Edith, turning at the sound of the hasty feet, "but I cannot help it. I must be on the spot, and at hand in case of being wanted; and as it will not do for me to stay in the house, I shall be in a lodging opposite."

"You are going into a lodging in the city—all by yourself?"

"Nurse will go with me: I have seen the rooms, and I know the good people to whom they belong. They keep a stationer's shop, and their rooms are clean and tidy, considering. What is it, dear?"—for Alice, almost choking, was trying to ask a favour, and yet not to seem too anxious—"Do you wish to go with me? You may, if you like."

"Oh, may I? Thank you, thank you—I am so glad!"

"But you will find it dull, Alice, and the rooms are very different from these, remember. I must be ready myself, to do what is ordered; they saw how the sight of me quieted him to-day, and they all hoped I should go again. As if ——"

Her calmness failed her here, and having now reached her own room she busied herself in forwarding the preparations which she had commenced before leaving home, and which nurse Ellis was now completing.

The luxurious house, which had seemed a Paradise when she entered it first, now appeared to Alice like a prison in comparison with the lodging at the stationer's; and Edith's kindness in taking her thither, exceeded even that with which she had made her welcome. Her joy touched and cheered Edith herself, and she owned she was very glad of her company—an admission which at once stopped a somewhat pungent remark which was on Tiny's lips when she heard of the arrangement.

"She will take more care of her own comforts if the child is to share them," she thought; and privately laid commands on Nurse Ellis to take a good supply with her from larder and store-closet, and, on pain of death, to order in everything that could possibly be wanted, at the best shops.

"Respectable old people who let lodgings may be charming in themselves, but their charms do not always extend to their furniture; and if you see that my sister does not sleep comfortably, you just go to some good upholsterer, and send in what is proper, without asking her leave."

Nothing, however, could be further from the young ladies' minds than a disposition to find fault with their apartments. Alice almost forgot the cause in the diversion of their removal, and thought nothing could be more inspiriting than their drive through the lighted streets, gradually leaving the more dignified region behind them, and traversing one quite unknown to her limited experience—its dinginess partly concealed by the shades of evening, and only adding to the vague mystery connected in her mind with the name of the City. On alighting at the stationer's private door they were received by Mrs. Honest and Lucy, with curtseys and smiles of welcome, and were ushered up into the tiny first-floor drawing-room, where a fire (after some battling with smoke) had been persuaded to burn brightly, and where the lamp, which Lucy quickly set on the table, revealed a snowy cloth, and pretty tea-service all in order duly set—and, as Alice thought, very inviting. Lucy, as Mrs. Honest explained, had been told off for Miss Leicester's service, while Grace was on duty over the way, and Joel would come across for her orders every morning and evening, by his master's special desire.

"He's got his blind pulled up, poor young gentleman, that he might see when the lamp was lighted. He seems so happy to know you are close at hand, his face looks quite different. I expect he'll sleep to-night like a lamb."

"I think you all want a good night's rest, Mrs. Honest."

"Well, ma'am, I shall be glad to know my master gets one; for I don't know what Miss Thirza will say to me, if he looks tired and worn out."

"Are you expecting Miss Thirza?"

"Dear me, yes, ma'am—didn't you know? She comes to-morrow, and that reminds me I have a deal to see to this evening, if you'll excuse me now. Lucy will let me know if there is anything I can do for you, Miss Leicester. It is but a poor place for you to be in, to be sure."

Edith assured her it was all just as she liked, and then, knowing the good woman's propensity to talk, begged her not to lose more time with them. While Lucy was going in and out, spreading the table for their tea, Miss Leicester stood over the fire, in a musing attitude, which suggested to Alice the question, "Who is Miss Thirza?"

Edith could not help smiling. "What made you find out that I was thinking of her at that moment?"

"It is my trade to read faces, and yours is always legible, if one only knows the language," smiled Alice. "You are not delighted that she is coming, whosoever she may be."

"She is Mr. Forrest's eldest sister; and was quite a mother to him and his brother when they were children. Her being there will be a great help to him, no doubt, and will make it easier for us to visit the house."

"Then why do you look as if you wished she wouldn't come?"

"Suppose you sit down and have your tea; and don't be too inquisitive," said Miss Leicester, good humouredly: and Alice took the hint, silently resolved to satisfy herself some other way.

They sat down to tea with much apparent cheerfulness, and talked of ordinary matters; and Lucy waited upon them with beaming eyes and joyful alacrity, as if life could offer her no higher honour than to be Miss Leicester's handmaiden. Nurse Ellis observed as much to her young mistress, afterwards.

"And it seems to me you might do a deal worse than take her, my dear young lady, when you begin to think of settling. She and her sister are two of the tidiest girls I know; and tidy girls are none so plentiful that one can afford to let any slip."

Although Miss Leicester's reply was to the effect that such remarks were premature, it is probable that the subject crossed her mind, as she took occasion to ask Lucy if she were still desirous of trying the stage? Lucy, with reddening cheeks, declared she should never think of *that* again, she was sure. Edith asked after her friend Caterina. Caterina was happy—she was going to be married; at least, not quite yet, for they had nothing saved to buy things with, but Tonio was trying for work at the theatre, and when they could furnish a room they would get married directly. She had quite believed he was dead, and he had only just found her out. He had been half over the world, and might have been a rich man, only he was robbed —poor Tonio!

"They are wise to wait till they have saved something. I hope you are putting by, Lucy."

"Yes, ma'am, thank you, I always put by a little—it's a rule in our guild. Did you know, Miss Leicester, that Grace had heard from *him* at last—from Darch Williams?"

The name was uttered with a reverential emphasis, that showed what importance she attached to such an event. Edith's sympathy had always been ready for the troubles and joys of the sisters, and it was with no feigned interest she asked for more particulars.

"A friend of his, a most respectable, oldish sort of man, of the name of Jones, has brought her word that Darch Williams is on his way home, only it is a great secret. She told me never to name it, and I wouldn't, only to you, ma'am."

"Is Grace very happy about it?"

"I can't say she is happy, exactly—she is all on the go, night and day, and can't sleep or eat, sometimes. But when he comes back safe and sound, she will be glad enough, and Mr. Jones says he is saving money to make her a home."

"Why has he never written?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I never liked to ask, because it vexed Grace."

"Perhaps she will come to-morrow, and tell me all about it. Is not that the bell for evening service?"

"Yes, ma'am. Sshall you want me for a little while?"

"Yes, I shall be glad if you will go in with me. Perhaps Miss Kerr will join us."

Miss Kerr, on being asked, opened her eyes in consternation. She had found an entertaining book, and thought herself seated for the night. A long, dull service and sermon, which she supposed was what Edith offered her, might be very good for some people, but she could not say she felt inclined for it. Oh yes, she would go, if Miss Leicester went, of course; it was all right, no doubt, and she went accordingly. And, contrary to her expectations, she found that the short service left her mind touched and softened.

Lucy, attending them into the chapel, had seated herself behind them, and her voice had been distinctly audible in the singing, supported by a deep bass: which proved to be that of the Cornishman, who had followed them unperceived. As they were leaving the building several persons pressed out before them, to avoid whom Edith drew Alice back into a dark corner, Joel and Lucy falling back also till they should again lead the way.

"We will let them all go out first; I do not want to stop and talk to anybody to-night," whispered Miss Leicester, seized with a sudden shyness of being recognised by some of her poor acquaintance under the circumstances. Alice had no objection: but they had not stood still many seconds before she heard a sound that arrested her attention, and made her strain every sense to catch it more distinctly.

It was a peculiar cough, so exactly like that of the infirm old gentleman in the railway carriage that she could have declared he had just gone by—and if so, that Gabriel Bruce's enemy was hovering round the house where he lay helpless and ill. This thought overpowered all other considerations: she pushed her way out, following the cough, which the first breath of fog outside seemed to renew with more vehemence. Outside the chapel door, however, she was detained by a coal cart, and lost the object of her pursuit altogether; and it was so dark that she was glad to hear Joel's voice behind, cautioning her to take care. "Joel!" she whispered, turning round, "did you see your old gentleman anywhere—the man you call Wily Wilkins?"

Joel seemed thunderstruck. "Wily Wilkins, Miss Kerr? Did *you* see him?"

"No, but I could declare I heard the same cough that I noticed so often coming from Paris."

"I remember it, ma'am—I wish I had heard it too. Which way did he go?"

"I cannot tell you—I lost the sound as I got to the door."

By this time Edith and Lucy had joined them, and nothing more passed till they were in their lodgings again. At Alice's request, however, Joel followed the ladies into the sitting-room, while Lucy was getting them some refreshments; and, in his presence, she explained to Miss Leicester why she had so unceremoniously left her.

Edith turned pale, and asked what Joel thought. He replied that he must go and consult Martin, and that most likely one or the other of them would keep watch all night.

"But tell me first," she said, in a voice of deep emotion, "why you think this man is Mr. Bruce's enemy? What can he have done to make one?"

"It's a longish story, ma'am, and some part of it only Mr. Bruce himself would have a right to tell; certainly, he never did anything but just what a gallant gentleman would, under the circumstances, but that was the very thing they hated him for."

"Have you time to tell us something about it? You do not know how terrible it sounds to me; and, as Mr. Bruce is helpless himself, and we must all join in trying to defend him, it is really necessary we should know whom we have to encounter. I am no coward, when I know what the danger is. It is vague uncertainty that is the worst to bear."

"So it is, ma'am, to be sure; and as you desire it, I'll tell you what I can without making too long a story of it. I must tell you, Mr. Bruce knew something of Wily Wilkins before we did—that is, the Ironhand and me. He fell in with him at Sydney, and found out what his character was there. However, he lost sight of him for a year or two, and forgot all about him, I fancy. You know, perhaps, ma'am, that Mr. Bruce kept a store at one time about twelve miles from the Wambiloa diggings, which had just been opened; so the rush was going on, and a smart Yankee, who reckoned he'd make a fortune by selling food and goods at five hundred per cent. profit, had run up the building, and stocked it, and then fell ill and died. The whole concern was going for a mere song, when my master took it in a lump, and we all turned to, waiting upon swarms of people—some rough, some smooth; morning, noon, and night, the stream poured along. I shall never forget it. We took money by the hatful, and we earned it; it was the turn in Mr. Bruce's luck. Well, a party came at last, that had been wandering about and lost their way, and were half-famished and done up, with very little money, it seemed, among them; and the leader was Wily Wilkins. Mr. Bruce knew him again, though he didn't think the fellow remembered him. We

gave them supper and shelter, as a matter of course, and they were so beat they stayed on for some days; and we should have thought nothing of their not being able to pay, but there was something we didn't like in the look of them. Wilkins was civil-spoken enough, but his mates were a lot I should have been sorry to meet alone anywhere; their eyes were always on the watch, and their knives always handy. We affronted them by declining to let them have as much drink as they wanted; and we had to tell them we wouldn't break our rules to please them, or a hundred such. Well, all that might have passed; but they had a poor fellow along with them, a sort of natural, whom they cruelly made a slave of, and that we couldn't stand. They teased and jeered at him when they were jolly, and cuffed him when they were savage; and when we took his part, as we did at first, good-natured like, there was a grim look in their eyes that told us pretty plain how they would make him smart for our interfering. So we had to make them understand that if they didn't drop all that while they were under our roof, out they'd have to go; and Wily Wilkins passed the word to sing small, and the innocent had a holiday. The first use he made of it was to slip away for a long tramp by himself. We thought they would be after him, but they laughed, and said he often did it, and always found his way back. He had a craze about a treasure he had hid somewhere, and couldn't remember where; and every now and then, he thought he could recollect, and started off, with his wits seeming quite clear at first, for people had met and talked with him; but it always ended in his breaking down, and crawling back on his tracks, which he could follow like a dog. He would turn up, they said, half starved; and they seemed to think it a good joke.

"Mr. Bruce said nought to them, but he took Martin and me on one side, and, says he, 'I can't let a poor fellow like that die for want of help. One of you must stay here in charge (we had half a dozen men and lads as helpers in one way or another) and the other will go with me on his trail.' Said Martin, 'I'll go;' and as I knew he was worth ten of me on a track, I agreed to keep the store meanwhile. And precious glad I was, ma'am, when that job was off my hands, with such a party to keep an eye on. Well, the captain and the Ironhand followed poor Zack for two days, and caught him up at last, crying bitterly about his treasure that he couldn't find, do what he would. He was quite knocked up, so they fed and comforted him, and Mr. Bruce carried him on his shoulders the greater part of the way home—Martin going before as guide—and glad enough was I to see them safe back. Then the party, being fresh themselves, said they must go on to the diggings, and Zack must go with them; and only laughèd when we declared he wanted rest."

"The wretches!" said Edith, "but what right did they pretend that they had over his liberty?"

"That is just what we asked, Miss Leicester, but they had a way of frightening him into saying what they chose; for when he was asked

before us, he said he would go: and we couldn't keep him against his will. However, Mr. Bruce wasn't satisfied, and he let them get a little way ahead, and then he followed them up. He hadn't told me where he was going, but I missed him and followed; and when I got up to the place, if he wasn't giving Wily Wilkins as good a hiding as ever man got in this world. They had tied up Zack, and the fellow was thrashing him when the captain came upon them; he floored two before they knew what he was about, got Wilkins's whip out of his hand, and let him taste how it felt. 'There, Joel,' he said, when he saw me come up, 'I've given him a lesson how he ill-treats creatures that God gives us to take care of.' And he threw the man from him, and didn't Wily give him a look as he slunk off! Ask why he is his enemy—no one would ask that who had seen his face that day."

"And poor Zack, what became of him?"

"We took him back with us, ma'am, and he lived at the store as long as we did. By the time we had made a clearance of the Yankee's stock, Wambiloa was getting deserted; and then we moved on to another part of the country, and went prospecting for ourselves. By this time Zack had taken kindly to us all, but the captain was his favourite, and he would follow him about like a spaniel. He had got into the habit, wherever we made up his bed, of creeping out of it to lie on the boards near Mr. Bruce's; and it ended in his always being allowed to sleep as close to him as he pleased. When we camped out, Zack slept under the captain's blanket; and by day, if we wanted to keep him quiet, we had only to lay down Mr. Bruce's jacket, or cloak, or anything he had worn, and tell him to guard it—and there he would sit, just like a dog, quite content, never thinking of stirring. But he was too useful for us to do that often; sometimes we really thought his mind might have been cured, he showed so much cleverness in odd ways. He really seemed, as we said, to smell the gold, it had such a charm for him, and he showed such sagacity in finding it out. Our luck, for we were lucky at last, was partly his doing. Poor Zack! he was an innocent soul, and we got very fond of him, all three of us. I beg your pardon, Miss Leicester, but when I think of what followed ——"

His voice faltered, and, strong man as he was, he was unable to go on for a minute or two.

"I am almost afraid to ask—did they get him again?"

"Yes, ma'am, they did—but if you please, I will leave that part of the story. Mr. Bruce would tell it much better, and it is no business of mine to go into it without his leave. I've talked too much already, I'm afraid, and tired you out."

"I am not in the least tired. I must know one thing—is poor Zack alive?"

"No, ma'am. He died in Mr. Bruce's arms, and we buried him as like a Christian as we could. I am sure he was more of one than many with all their wits. I think now, Miss Leicester, I'd best be

going to put Martin on his guard, in case Miss Kerr's ears did not deceive her; for if you knew all, you'd say with me, that the sharper look-out we keep, the better."

"I don't think my ears deceived me," said Alice. "I have all my life been keen of hearing, and never mistake a voice; and I have often noticed that coughs are as peculiar as voices. That cough was not like any I ever heard but on that particular day, and I could almost swear to it."

"Well, Miss Kerr, if so be you are in the right, it's just as well you were there. He has dodged me several times now, and if I do but get hold of him—I'll give him leave to try his worst."

CHAPTER XV.

MR. JONES UNDERTAKES TO REGULATE THE CLOCK.

Miss Thirza Forrest was considerably older than her brothers, to whom, as Edith said, she had been as a mother, and whom she looked upon as a couple of schoolboys, to be scolded to their faces and held up as prodigies behind their backs. Her own home was generally near a younger married sister in the country; but any intimation that Philip or David needed a helping hand, or a supervising head, was sure to bring her to take possession of the bachelor household, whether invited or not, as in the present instance.

No small excitement was caused in the vicinity by her arrival, from the fact of her having an immense hamper on the roof of the cab, which several railway porters had heaved up thither with difficulty, and which the driver and Mr. Forrest together could not lift down, till Joel came to help them. The rest of the lady's luggage consisted of a small box and hand-bag, both of which were under her own eye inside the vehicle.

A good-humoured remark from her brother, that she never came empty-handed, produced the sharp retort that it was quite time something went into the house, while so much was going out.

"I know all about it as well as if you told me; starvation for yourself, turtle soup and champagne for everybody with a dismal story—and it shall not be if I can help it. Now, Honest, my dear soul, all this provender is in your charge; there's a ham, and a cheese, and a haunch of mutton, and a parcel of Archangel tongues (I know they'll be a temptation), and ever so many pots of soup and things—you'll know what to do with them, and if your master has nothing to eat it will be your fault, not mine. Luggage? Oh, yes, there is my box; *that* won't break anybody's back to carry; thank goodness, I am no slave to trunks and portmanteaus. Well, Davie!" as she turned into the back parlour, and found herself alone with her brother, "let me look at you. Ah! there are lines under those eyes that tell their own tale—no sleep, and no wholesome food. Never

mind, I shall see to your meals now, and put out your candle at night. Not starved, do you say? Don't tell me. Philip says just the same, and much I believe him. Now then, to turn to something else—what is all this about Gabriel Bruce and Edith Leicester?"

Her brother briefly explained. She hardly gave him time to speak, before she ran on with her comments.

"Come into lodgings opposite, is she? She ought to be ashamed of herself, and I hope she is—not for being there, but for his being here. If young ladies can't marry without sending men to risk their lives as she sent him, they had better let it alone, in my opinion. Oh yes, her father—it is always the fathers and mothers who are in fault—don't tell me. If she had cared a straw about him, depend upon it she would have brought her father round, as all the girls do, now-a-days. No, no—she must have her house in London, and her carriage, I suppose; and he has been working all these years to get them for her, and come home shattered in health and spirits—quite a wreck, I daresay. Come home well? Don't talk nonsense. If he is in the state you describe, it's plain enough whose fault it is; and I shall tell her so, you may depend."

David Forrest's experience of his sister's character taught him that no warning or remonstrance beforehand would be half as efficacious as letting her judge for herself; and, as he expected, the sight of Gabriel, when she was admitted to his room, stilled her tongue at once, and quickened her sympathies. When he pressed her hand, and thanked her for coming to help nurse him, and apologised for the immense amount of trouble he was giving, Miss Thirza coaxed and petted him as if he had been a sick child.

Being prepared to compensate for her weakness in dealing with the gentleman by extra severity with the lady, it was rather a disappointment to find that Edith, when assured she was not required by the state of the patient, spent her time in the work of the Mission; and was all day long among the sick and infirm of her district, labouring with the more energy that her time of service seemed drawing to a close. A sense of loyalty made Alice go with her, though, as she said, it was not in her line; and her quick wit and ready memory were of no small value to the poor young lady, whose heart and mind were already so pre-occupied that the ordinary routine of work was almost oppressive.

It was not till evening that a summons reached them. The doctor was paying his usual visit, and suddenly became aware that Gabriel was mysteriously whispering directions about the loading of the guns —there were tracks near the camp, and they would be coming after *her*—he knew it. Miss Thirza saw in all the faces how eagerly the step was watched for, and could not help being touched by the simplicity and sweetness of Edith's manner when she entered the sick-room, and laid her hand on that of the sufferer. There was a degree of humility about the action, as if she felt she owed him a

debt, and was thankful to be allowed to pay it. The effect of her touch, her look, her few soothing words, was instantaneous; he lay still, with her hand in his, and gazed in her face with such unutterable content, that, as the doctor told Miss Thirza, it was a pity Miss Leicester was not able to be his nurse.

"She has a genius for it, and I only wish she were obliged to earn her bread at so much a week. I should secure her for the hospital directly."

"I'd bespeak her first for a mission-woman," interposed David.

"Well, well, I know nothing about it," said his sister, "these fashionable young ladies are beyond me. But I have been told that it is very usual among them to make a deal of goodness in Lent cover a vast deal of worldliness all the rest of the year; and we all know in what school Sir Matthew's daughters were brought up."

"She has been under other training since that," was David's answer, the more gently spoken that it was a subject on which he felt inclined to speak sharply.

Tiny drove constantly to see them, bringing lively reports of the various lights thrown by public wisdom and private benevolence on their story. Charity, by her account, was divided on the question—to which of her lovers had the fair Matilda behaved the worse? Sir Jesse went about as usual in the most heroic manner, and never breathed a word about his wrongs; but there were those who believed he had been wronged, and was a broken-hearted man—while others maintained the real victim was Gabriel, whose exile was said to be her doing, and who had evidently sacrificed his health to her ambition.

"I don't know what has made everybody so spiteful all of a sudden; but stories are certainly being told against us, and I have my doubts about one's own most particular friends. I met Sir Jesse, by the way, as I was coming here to-day," said Mrs. Carroll, on one occasion, "and he was so bland and courteous I longed to tell him, then and there, that I suspected he was at the bottom of all the gossip. Take my word for it, he is planning mischief in one way or another. You may smile, Edith, but if you had seen his face to-day you would have felt it was a great piece of luck that you were not your own great-grandmother."

"It is not so very uncommon, is it?"

"Nonsense; you know very well what I mean. Fashions alter, and dangers too. You are safe from those of the olden generation; but I shall be heartily glad when I can think we are all out of reach of nineteenth century ill-nature, which takes care to have the law on its side."

We all like to be true prophets; but it may be doubted whether Clare would have been gratified had she known how nearly she had hit the mark, and what had been Sir Jesse's errand at the time she met him.

Besides his offices in the City and at the West-end, well known to

men of business, and to all his numerous clients, he was sometimes to be found at the chambers of a certain attorney named Plummer, in a dark street near Hatton Garden; the chambers being, in fact, his own, and Mr. Plummer his confidential agent. To these uninviting quarters, as to a secret stronghold, had the rich contractor occasionally retired from society, and remained hidden, when supposed to be out of town; and no one ever met him there except by his own special appointment. On the present occasion he had only had time to take up a favourable position in an inner room, for hearing and seeing unperceived, before Mr. Plummer's youthful clerk admitted Mr. Jones, in his working dress, carrying an old clock which had been delivered over to his charge to be cleaned—certainly, not before it wanted cleaning. Armed with this token of respectability, that adventurous personage had boldly made his way up the staircase; and on being shown into the room where the agent was writing, made a respectful bow, and looked about for the bracket on which the clock was to stand.

"So you've brought that back at last," observed Mr. Plummer, without lifting his eyes from the paper on which he was writing; "you are a slow hand at this kind of job."

"It's a slow kind of job, Mr. Plummer, when it has been allowed to wait so many years. And there have been drawbacks, too."

"I daresay; it is dirty work at the best."

"Yes, sir, the dirt does seem to get grimed into the metal, somehow. It sticks so you can hardly get it off."

"And the metal sticks to the fingers. Yes, I know all about that. Now then, is it wound up? Will it go?"

"It will want regulating, sir."

"Too fast—or too slow?"

"Too slow just now—clogged, I should say, with the smoke."

"Oil wanted?"

"Not exactly, sir; I should say it rather wanted air."

"Bring it in here," said Sir Jesse.

At the sound of his voice, a flash from the eye of the workman betrayed a certain amount of resentment; but, suppressing every other outward sign, he simply obeyed the order, and stood in the presence of his wealthy employer.

There was no superfluity of blandness in either the countenance he met, or the voice that addressed him. The one was dark, the other stern.

"Put the clock on the mantelpiece for the present. You can come and regulate it from time to time."

"I will, Sir Jesse, thank you. It will stand a good bit of work yet, if it is kept clear of smoke."

"Yes, we must see to that. You want room to work?"

"Well, yes, Sir Jesse, we do. I've done what I could, but where a job is so sharply watched, and half a dozen eyes and ears are always on the alert, one is cramped, as you may say, and don't get on."

"What are they about?"

"Just nothing, Sir Jesse, but keeping watch over the Captain night and day. And to tell you the honest truth, I've no mind to be caught by either of those fellows; and while they are both there I can only bide my time. There was a talk of Martin's going down into the country again after the house they went to see, but Grace thinks there is no hurry about that now. Nobody else wants the house, so they can afford to wait, worse luck."

"Lowlevels, you mean?"

"Yes, sir, I think she said that was the name."

"That hint is worth something. Can you depend on that young woman?"

"I'd risk my neck with her any day, so long as I didn't let her see why I risked it. She'll stand by me through fire and water, if only I don't hurt her conscience; and that's what I don't mean to do. I've told her I shall have a hard fight to clear my good name, and look to her to help me, and she'll do her best; but I mustn't ask her to do a thing that would wrong anybody, and I won't."

"She gives you information, however, without scruple."

"Yes, she tells me, innocent-like, what she hears, because I know how to get it out of her; but it is not often I can get a word with her at all. If you could get Martin off the beat for a time I should have a better chance."

"By the way, have you found out anything more about that fellow?"

"The Ironhand, sir? I don't know whether I have or not; but oddly enough, I hear there is an old party living in the same model lodging-house with Grace and her sister, whose name is the same, and not a common one either."

"Martin is common enough."

"But, I take it, Erasmus is not. And that's the name of both of 'em."

"Are they related?"

"I tried to find out; but it seems the old man knows of no relations bearing his name, and was never married himself."

"Then I do not see what interest his name can have for us."

"Well, it ought to have some, seeing the interest he takes in yours, Sir Jesse."

"Mine, fellow?"

"Yours, sir; no disrespect to you intended, but, I may say, it's like poison to him."

There was a short silence; Sir Jesse sat motionless. Mr. Jones stepped up to the clock, and set it going by a touch of the pendulum.

"Now don't you be in a fuss and a skurry," he said, apostrophising the useful timepiece, "you'll get every hour of the day and night in turn if you'll just have the patience to wait for them, and the wit to keep on ticking till you do."

"Where does that Martin live—the old one?" asked Sir Jesse, abruptly, ignoring this last speech.

"Down yonder, near St. Edmund's; at the Models, Champion Street, third floor."

Sir Jesse made a note of the address, and laid a couple of sovereigns on the table. The fee was pocketed in silence, and Mr. Jones had turned to take leave, when a fit of coughing seemed almost to take his breath away.

Sir Jesse looked at him with extreme disgust. "You might have stopped that noise till you were outside, my man," he said.

"Might I? If you'll have the goodness to show me how, I'll make bold to hand you back your sovereigns, sir, as the best doctor in England. This cough has plagued me for years, off and on—only at times it gets a lull, and I forget it. The climate here makes it worse; and what's more, the young lady that came over in the steamer with Mr. Bruce, as nearly as possible spotted me one night that I had mixed with the rest in chapel—and all along of having heard me in the train from Paris. I've never dared try that again, nor shall, so long as she's there."

"You mean Miss Kerr?"

"Yes, sir—that's another chance against me; and the only good card I hold is my own faithful girl, who tells me everything. But it won't do to play that too often."

"No, indeed. I advise you to get rid of your cough, though. It might be inconvenient. Meanwhile I'll see about clearing your way. Mr. Plummer will have the goodness to let you out, and you can call again in a week to regulate the clock."

When the agent returned to his room after seeing Mr. Jones safely off the premises, he found his patron writing at his table.

"Anything new to be done?" he asked, quietly.

Sir Jesse looked up, threw a slip of grey paper across the table, and rising, placed himself before the fire.

"You will start to-morrow, so you have no time to lose. That will cover it. Let it be distinctly understood that you want immediate possession."

"Of Lowlevels, of course."

"Of course—do all but buy it—for a client, with a large family—consequently, anxious to get it cheap."

"I understand. But haste being an object, why not start to-night?"

"Because there is something else to be done first."

(To be continued.)

A WORLD BETWEEN.

By Mrs. G. Linnæus Banks, Authoress of "The Manchester Man."

MY father's will had left me master of Tarnbeck, and sole guardian of my half-sister Amy, the child of a second marriage; a light, laughing, fairy-like creature, all song and sunshine.

Fashion did find her way to Tarnbeck occasionally, in the train of Lady Clevedale and others, and had trifled with skirts and bonnets; but never dared Fashion lay a ruthless hand on Amy Beckton's glorious flaxen hair. So it rippled in light curls to her waist at nineteen freely as when the buoyant schoolgirl of nine chased butterflies in the green lanes with her tresses floating on the wind.

The Becktons of Tarnbeck had held their own when a strong arm, a strong will, and a stronghold were the three requisites either for the acquisition of power or its maintenance.

Alas! for the degenerate scions of those warlike ancestors, whose armour shared with antlers and other trophies of the hunting-field the honour of decorating the entrance-hall. Sword and halbert, gun and pistol, hunting-horn and hound, had given way before the followers of William Caxton. The cannon on the battlements could not be trusted to fire a birthday salute, the strong-room was the library, and for three generations the owner had been a confirmed bookworm.

The castellated mansion was peculiarly situated. It was built of coarse grit-stone, on an elevated knoll, at the junction of two rapid streams fresh from the hills, which, on their marriage a hundred yards or so away down the valley, assumed the dignity of a river. In wet seasons, when the becks, swollen by heavy rains or melting snows, overflowed their banks, the water crept upwards like an insidious enemy on all sides, until the house stood isolated on a raised island, calmly defiant above the threatening waters, which never passed the vanguard of firs, howsoever close and angry might be their advance. An array of mediæval windows, and the Gothic entrance with its nail-studded door, opened northwards, towards the hills and recesses of Clevedale, where the tumbling becks supplied water-power for one or two woollen mills; the cottages of the operatives looking like flocks of dingy sheep on the distant hill-sides. This was the original front of the building; but Amy preferred the modernised back with its southern aspect of broad green pasture lands, straggling plantations, and the impetuous streams which chafed and fretted before they blent and rolled away placidly under willows and sedges, a respectable river. A fierce semicircular-fronted tower, having two unequal wings, pierced with loopholes for defence, had Tarnbeck been

in its fighting days, before the ivy crept over it and the baron's hall in the central tower had been converted into a spacious drawing-room with three lofty windows at the embayed end. Over this was the library, our room of rooms, lit in correspondence with the apartment beneath, but teeming with well-bound, well-bought volumes on shelves which occupied every available space.

Amy had had full liberty with lace and muslin, gorgeous satin and damask, to brighten up the dark nooks of Tarnbeck, so long as she left the entrance-hall and the library as our good father had bequeathed them to us. So the thick old Turkey carpet still preserved silence beneath the foot; dark and cumbrous ancestral chairs and tables served as depositories for tomes as cumbrous; the summer sun shot his rays through heavy crimson velvet drapery, and fell with a ruddy glory on the elaborately-carved old oak cabinet, which, black as ebony, had faced the windows and defied the sunbeams to pierce its secrets for many generations.

There is no doubt I am a bookworm, as my father was, but I have not reached the age of mustiness: perhaps Amy has dusted the cobwebs off her studious brother Charlie; perhaps Amy's friends have helped to preserve some of youth's freshness in the student whom she twitted with old bachelorhood at thirty.

Yes, Amy's friends, all Amy's. The laughter from the croquet lawn, the music from the drawing-room, the whiffs of cigar from the terrace, all indicate the friends of my beautiful, lovable little sister; the pet of Clevedale society, the fiancée of Frank Fairclough; whose father is head partner of the firm owning the chief mill in Clevedale. Have I no more than a brotherly interest in her friends? Ah, well, we shall see.

I suppose I am naturally too shy and reserved to cultivate friendships. At all events, I have never had more than one *friend*, Oscar Bergheim; and he went away—to place a world between us.

Oscar was the son of a Swedish merchant, sent to England for education; and we met when mere boys at a public school, both boarding with the same master. There are few animals more cruel than the untrained school-boy; and this native savagery drew together Oscar and myself, in spite of our utter dissimilarity. I was a pale, slight boy, more inclined to pore over a book in a corner than to join in rough games in the playground; I was soon dubbed "Miss Charlotte," and marked out for persecution. Oscar, though three years my junior, was stout, muscular, dark-browed, fiery-eyed, impulsive, with a capacity for loving and hating rare amongst men. His ignorance of English, his foreign accent and manners, made him also a butt for the bullets of ridicule and practical joking; but he went in for a tussle with one of the bullies, and gave the ruffian a grip which served for the whole squad. Still in speech they had him at a disadvantage, until I (who from my father had picked up a smattering of many strange tongues) became interpreter for him, and

he became champion for me. "Damon and Pythias," "Orestes and Pylades" were among the wordy brickbats hurled at us, but they fell like feathers, and our friendship grew with our years.

There were no home-goings for Oscar, he was too far away. It saddened me at vacation time to see his efforts to hide his home-sickness, his longings for Sweden's streams and mountains. At my earnest entreaty he was invited to spend his holidays at Tarnbeck; and his rapturous admiration of the picturesque old place won my father's heart at once. Then Oscar had a store of genuine Norse rhymes and ballads, which made him free of that tabooed chamber, the library, and set my good father corresponding with half the antiquaries in England.

Amy was then a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired child, with speech as imperfect as her slave Oscar's. She was the veriest tyrant to him. Putting her sash for a bridle in his mouth, she would mount his shoulders and drive him on all-fours as inexorably over the hard gravel as over the smooth lawn; throw ball or hat into almost inaccessible places, and demand their recovery, and would go to sleep in no arms but Oscar's. One vacation he fished her out of the beck into which she had fallen; another, caught her runaway pony; and finally, pounded Frank Fairclough (then home for the holidays) almost to a jelly for throwing duck-weed on her new muslin frock and calling her contemptuously "a wax doll."

When, at seventeen, Oscar Bergheim was hurriedly recalled to Carlscrona, with no leisure for leave-taking, the nine-years-old damsel wept bitterly, and she was scarcely consoled by the large box of Swedish toys he sent over as a souvenir to his "little sweetheart."

At nine we weep with the eyes. At twenty we begin to weep with the heart. And so I wept my one friend Oscar's removal. He had been my sole companion and confidant, and, despite my seniority, my patron and protector. I never got into a scrape he did not champion me through, though it occurs to me now that but for his leadership I might never have got into the scrapes at all.

Letters and summer visits to Carlscrona bridged over the sea. My father's death changed everything.

I was appointed sole guardian of Amy, now in her seventeenth year. Then I had the conditions of my father's will to carry out. The entailed property was unincumbered, but the personal was weighted with so many legacies as to embarrass me considerably. I was, moreover, charged with my sister's care and maintenance until her marriage or majority, when I was enjoined to deliver up the title-deeds of certain properties, her own mother's jewels, and securities for moneys in bank and Funds to the value of £15,000. All of which were lying, and were to lie, in the family depository known as the "Palmer's Scrip."

This was one of those receptacles so ingeniously contrived within the recesses of the old carved cabinet as to defy suspicion or search,

and doubtless dread secrets had been consigned to the Palmer's Scrip in times gone by. The knowledge of it was held as a sacred trust, only to be passed from sire to son in the hour of extreme peril, and the master-key was only permitted to drop from the owner's dying hand into that of his successor.

My father, who had no mysteries of his own, had been wont to leave the outer doors of the cabinet open for convenience; and, having full trust in me, had initiated me into the secrets of slides and springs ere I was five-and-twenty. Yet it was with no little awe that I approached the cabinet the week after his funeral, holder of the little key and all which it represented. There were two entrances to the library, one on each side of the cabinet; I not only locked the one, but tried the lock of the other, which, leading principally to guest-chambers, was rarely used. Noiselessly and reverently I cleared from the table the books and papers which had been my father's latest studies. There was a solemn hush in the house; my footsteps made no sound; and yet as I put the curious little key into the ornamental keyholes, I felt as if the room were peopled with shadows of dead and buried Becktons, all striving to prevent intrusion on their dead-and-buried secrets. As the doors flew open I thought too of the now cold hand which had last opened those leaves; and, overpowered with emotion, sank on a chair, unable to proceed. The cabinet had three outer doors: within were several smaller ones closing on pigeon-holes and drawers. There were also three carved figures in niches, but only one affects my narrative. It was a Palmer, with hat and staff and scallop-shells and scrip complete. The scrip, notwithstanding the Will, was an innocent immovable bit of wood-carving, but on touching the least prominent button of his "sandalled shoon," the entire figure revolved and displayed a cavity behind, at least a foot deep, divided by three shelves—on each of which lay papers yellow with age. But it was not until the lowest shelf was pulled forward that the true scrip was revealed by the retirement of the adjoining nest of drawers. When these moved back, a lid held down by them flew open, and the box it covered was the Palmer's Scrip.

The title-deeds, the money securities, and an old case of trinkets were there. The chief of the latter were a set of sapphires, another of emeralds, and one of garnets, by no means so antique as the casket.

Closing the cabinet on replaced notes and parchments, I stepped down stairs to the drawing-room, casket in hand, hoping by the display of her mother's jewellery to divert the current of Amy's thoughts, and so for a time lighten the sorrow which seemed to press so heavily on her fair young head.

My entrance was arrested by a strange voice, low, grave, and musical, a voice which thrilled me as nought had ever done before. By nature somewhat reserved and shy, I hesitated, with the door in my hand, whether to face the enemy or beat a retreat. Amy's prompt

"Come in, Charlie. I want to present you to Miss Proctor," decided the question for me. And decided a much more momentous question at the same time.

There was nothing in the serene eyes or the calm gravity of the young lady to whom I was introduced to daunt any man, yet my embarrassment was painful. I coloured to the roots of my hair, and it was not until Lucy Fairclough smilingly put her hand in mine, saying, "What have I done to be overlooked this morning?" that I recovered my self-possession.

Lucy Fairclough was an average specimen of northern England's maidenhood, but the daughter of Mr. Fairclough's partner was something more. She was scarcely above the middle height; there was nothing marvellous in her brown hair or mild hazel eyes; her features were not chiselled to absolute proportion; yet there was such an air of fitness and harmony in face and figure, so much that was womanly in her manner, so much reposeful grace in every movement, that I was hopelessly fascinated on the spot. Not even in her garb was there a tint to startle us in contrast with Amy's sombre crape. Both she and Miss Fairclough were dressed in complimentary mourning, the effect of which was more soothing than gloomy.

"What curious specimen of antiquity have you there?" asked Amy, to break the first pause.

At the mention of the talismanic word "jewels," three pairs of eyes sparkled simultaneously; but I saw a quiet smile gather on Miss Proctor's face at the eager persistence of her friends to have the casket opened.

Conquering a strange foreboding of evil, I yielded to their entreaties; and we clustered round a small table near the middle window for their inspection. This brought me into close proximity with Miss Proctor; and as, case by case, the sparkling gems were displayed, and as I compared her calm appreciation of their beauty with the demonstrative admiration of Amy and Lucy, the ice of shyness thawed rapidly.

I was in no haste to retreat with my charge, but joined Amy in her solicitations that the young ladies should remain at Tarnbeck and dine with us. On my volunteering to send a messenger to Fairclough House, and to be their escort should Mr. Frank not be at liberty to join us, Amy looked amazed; but they consented, and I retired to fulfil the first part of my promise, and to replace the casket; little dreaming how bitterly I should regret their exhibition in the future.

Frank Fairclough responded to the invitation with an alacrity I neither comprehended nor appreciated at the time; and notwithstanding our recent bereavement, which of course had a subduing influence, the hours flew by so rapidly and satisfactorily that Lucy's frequent reminders of their flight and the propriety of moving homewards seemed to fall on deaf ears.

That was but the precursor of many social evenings, to which, as our sorrow wore away, other guests were admitted; but I never left my beloved books so readily as for our pleasant quintett parties, of which Miss Proctor made one. All happiness has an end. Mine terminated when Miss Proctor went back to Leeds at the expiration of a three-months' visit.

Other friends came and went; notably the Faircloughs, but I shut myself up in the library, rarely quitting my shell, whilst Amy visited and received visits alone; until Lady Clevedale read me a sharp lecture on the impropriety thereof, and suggested a companion or chaperone for my pretty half-sister.

Frank Fairclough (who had long been forgiven his contempt for wax dolls) frowned, and Amy pouted, at the proposition; but Aunt Lydia had not been at Tarnbeck two days before Amy danced round her, declaring she was "a dear old darling," and clenched the assertion with a hug and a kiss which the genial old lady reciprocated.

Aunt Lydia was certainly an acquisition, she relieved me of much anxiety and responsibility in the care of my sister; then, she guided the reins of household management without taking them from Amy's hands, and was to the blithe little beauty just the companion, confidante, and wise counsellor the motherless girl needed.

When Amy was eighteen Lady Clevedale carried her off to London in triumph, not without many misgivings on my part, and expostulations from Frank Fairclough, whose interference I felt at first inclined to resent.

Yet his warmth and vehemence took me somewhat by surprise, and his manly earnestness impressed me more in his favour than years of previous intimacy.

It was my first glimpse into his heart, where I clearly saw Amy enthroned, though never a word said he of an interest in her welfare deeper than that of a true friend. And he might have shaken my resolution, but that my promise to Lady Clevedale was already given.

During her absence my solitude was broken in upon, to my great content, by the unexpected arrival of Oscar Bergheim, whom I had not seen for more than two years. He, like myself, had lost a father in that interval, and having no taste for mercantile pursuits, was about, so he said, to retire from the firm. Business connected therewith had brought him over.

His stay was short, and I half fancied Amy's absence had something to do with it. We talked over old times, visited old haunts, played chess together of an evening; but he had evidently outlived our quiet life, and I felt as if an imperceptible, impalpable film was spreading between our old friendship. To bear him company, I smoked and drank more than was my wont. It occurred to me that Frank Fairclough, from his larger intercourse with the world, might assimilate better with him—but lo! I brought a lighted match to

gunpowder. There was an explosion, and Oscar Bergheim departed from Tarnbeck the next morning.

He did not leave England, however, so soon as I expected. Amy's artless letters to Lucy and myself told of meeting him in society, then of his frequent visits at Lady Clevedale's, and his brotherly attention to herself.

The day following the receipt of this last communication Frank Fairclough was summoned to London on unexpected business.

More than a year had flown. The woods were dressed in their fullest robes of green; the sombre firs put forth pale fingers with which the sunbeams toyed; hill and dale and garden were glorious with summer's crown of flowers; the air came up the valley from the south, and through the open windows filled the rooms with the sweet scent of new hay from the meadows. Soon the sun turned towards his western couch, the starlings flew home to their nests on the battlements, and twittered their vespers ere they tucked their heads under their wings, while the grasshopper and nightingale, on the alert, answered from below.

I was imbued with the fullest sense of all this sweetness, but I felt rather than saw or heard these country timekeepers. I sat, from habit, by the fireless grate (which a fluffy haze of some fibrous material veiled), studying neither nature nor books, but human hearts.

Alicia Proctor was again at Fairclough House. Aunt Lydia and Amy had driven up the dale to greet her. I, who had been longing for a sight of her as a parched Arab for a desert spring, had not dared to join them. And there I sat, taking myself to task for my timidity, asking myself over and over again what there was in the pale, shy bookworm of thirty to attract so perfect a sample of fresh womanhood as Alicia?

I had nursed my love in solitude and silence until it had grown almost too big for my heart, yet the "dear Alicia" of my dreams was only "Miss Proctor" when we met; and I had small reason to hope she had penetrated my secret.

A sharp rap at the room door put to flight my cogitations. My "come in!" was followed by the entrance of Amy, in an airy azure robe and jaunty hat trimmed to match, with a flush on her face as if fresh from her drive. She was accompanied by Frank Fairclough, whose arm (or I was mistaken in the twilight) encircled her as they passed through the doorway.

I was not left long in doubt.

I usually sat with the side of my chair inclined towards the windows, so that the light should fall on my book or paper; it fell now on the faces of the pair as they came together round by the cabinet, and Amy, kneeling on the footstool at my feet, threw her arms round my neck, and whispered, "You love me very much, do you not, Charlie dear?"

"You know I do, Amy," I answered, smoothing her radiant

aureole of curls with my disengaged hand, as the other held her close.

"And you would like to make me happy?"

"Are you not happy, Amy?"

"Ah, yes; but very much happier, I mean, Charlie."

I glanced up at Fairclough's manly face before I replied. It wore a look of anxious expectation.

"I would lay down my life, Amy, to secure your happiness."

A moment's hesitation; a tug at a tiny glove; then, in lower and more tremulous tones, as a sparkling ring was revealed: "Frank has placed this on my finger, Charlie. May I wear it?"

Frank, who had been silent hitherto, interposed.

"Charlie, may your sister be permitted to wear that ring as a token of betrothal until I replace it with a plainer one?"

Amy clung to me, and Frank looked out of his clear grey eyes, alike entreatingly. An overwhelming sense of responsibility overpowered my utterance. I paused to reflect. I think the form of Oscar floated before my eyes, obscuring my vision.

Frank was the first to break the painful silence.

"Charles Beckton, you *must* have seen that I have loved your sister for many years. My father, though fully approving my choice, imposed silence upon me. But for that I should have declared myself last year, when I trembled for my hopes, and for my love, consigned to Lady Clevedale's fashionable coterie. My business in town was solely to watch over our darling. I felt that my presence was needed, Charles." (He did not say why.) "Our firm takes me into partnership this week, and that change in my position sets my tongue at liberty. You see I use my freedom to forge fresh fetters. I have Amy's promise. Surely, old fellow, you will not withhold yours?"

I had risen, and buried my head in my arms against the carved old mantelpiece. From time to time vague suspicions of this had flashed across my mind, to be as instantly dismissed. I had regarded Amy as a child, and had other views for her maturity. The crisis had come all too soon, and my day-dreams were dispelled. I felt Amy's hand creeping up to my shoulder, and a plaintive murmur in my ear.

"Charlie, are you sorry for this? I thought you knew that I loved Frank, and would be glad to give me to one you knew so well —so good a man."

She touched me there. I did know him for a good and true man, firm and self-reliant, the very one to guard and guide my darling. I was not so sure of Oscar's principles; yet had I, without warranty, built up an aerial castle in which he and Amy were to reign blissfully together.

I was roused by Frank's voice—somewhat husky in its tone.

"Come, come, old fellow, I did not expect this! Amy and I have been picturing a pleasant surprise, a cheery welcome. You

should not have left us so much together had you not looked orward to this with satisfaction. Was not love inevitable?"

I turned round.

"Yes, yes, Frank, you are both right. It is only I who have been blind. Now kiss your bachelor brother, Amy, and go to Frank, with my best blessing. I believe you have chosen better for yourself than should have done for you.—Frank, give me your hand."

II.

FRANK was in Leeds when, a week later, Oscar Bergheim took us by surprise as before. Ours was a quiet household, and, except now and then a quaint old antiquary, we had few male visitors staying with us. His sudden advent would have put Aunt Lydia in a flutter, had it not been a whim of mine to keep Oscar's room (in which no other friend was ever lodged) always aired and in readiness. He, too was the only one to whom the library door was unreservedly open. It had been so in my father's days; it was not likely to be otherwise in mine.

How tall and handsome he looked as he grasped my hand in the ancient entrance-hall with all the heartiness of bygone times. How courteously he acknowledged Aunt Lydia's old-fashioned curtsey, and how eloquent were his soft dark eyes as he held Amy's small hand in a tenacious clasp, and said, "I trust my little sweetheart is glad to see me again."

I saw the colour mount to her face, and so did he; but we put different constructions upon it. I sighed to think that he might, like myself, have indulged hopes not to be realised; and, observing her continued embarrassment, was glad that Miss Proctor and Lucy Fairclough were spending the day at Tarnbeck.

How much more at ease was he than I! I envied his graceful self-possession as he took Amy in to dinner, whilst my arm trembled under the light touch of Alicia. So charming was his manner, so fluent and sparkling the conversation with which he enlivened the repast, that my own awkwardness impressed me painfully in the contrast. It was never so with Oscar Bergheim.

And so it was throughout his stay. He shone conspicuously, and I, nowise loth, sank into the shade. We had, all unconsciously, fallen into our old positions. I admitted his superiority by my tacit acquiescence in all he proposed; in fact I bowed down to the hero I had created.

He had a fine voice, well cultivated. He opened the piano, and we revelled in song and music for a space. He longed to breathe the fresh air, and we were straightway strolling under the firs, or among the flower-beds, and, like children, pelting each other with young fir-cones and roses, or plucking blooms for general presentation. He proposed cards, and Aunt Lydia responded on the instant, produced the cards, and helped him to arrange the table. But he appointed the game, and we novices were duly initiated.

He expressed his desire to renew his acquaintance with the neighbourhood, and immediately we found ourselves arranging boating-parties, croquet-parties, sketching-parties, picnics, rides and drives, with a zest unknown to Tarnbeck.

Lucy Fairclough, Aunt Lydia, and I were alike carried away by his impetuosity and enthusiasm; but I noticed that Alicia was graver than her wont, and that Amy shrank from his pointed attentions.

I observed, also, with a thrill of delight, that when he pressed forward to hand the ladies to their carriage, Alicia calmly placed her hand in mine, quietly ignoring his proffered assistance.

His presence created quite a revolution in Tarnbeck. The magnet drew other friends into the circle, and one pleasure-party succeeded another in rapid succession. But, whether at home or abroad, Oscar always attached himself to Amy with a kind of protecting devotion which she could not resent, and which gave me pain to witness under the circumstances.

I resolved at length, out of my great love for both, to acquaint him with the fact of Amy's engagement; but the task was not left to me.

In the mountain limestone, about seven miles up the dale, was a natural cavern, known as the Hermitage. It was screened from observation by larches, pine, and mountain-ash, and only accessible by a narrow zig-zag footpath cut in the steep face of the rock. This terminated at a green plateau in front of the cavern, close by the side of which gushed a stream of the purest water. It had worn a runnel for itself across the platform, and fell in foam over the crag to be lost in hazel-bushes, brambles, and bracken at the foot of the hill. This was a favourite resort for gipsy-parties; and Oscar, remembering the spot, had pitched upon it for our picnic.

Our party numbered just a dozen, including the vicar's two unmarried daughters, the Rev. John Smiles the curate, Dr. Halgarth's son James, in all the flush of newly-acquired honours of an M.R.C.S., his sister, and a student friend, who kept very close to Miss Halgarth. The rendezvous was Fairclough House.

Amy and Lucy, being capital horsewomen, were mounted. So were Miss Halgarth, her brother's friend, and Oscar.

I, being but an indifferent rider, presented myself as Jehu of our basket phaeton, containing my bosom's secret idol and Aunt Lydia, whose youthful heart and spinsterhood were voted sufficient qualifications for our party. The vicar's carriage, thrown open, held his stately daughters, the curate, and James Halgarth. Jock, our groom and ferryman, was in attendance. Hampers had been sent on by servants in advance.

The drive proved delightful. The morning air was fresh and exhilirating; the September sun shone, if not with a scorching glare, at least with sufficient warmth to brighten up the grey stone houses of the overgrown village, and to gild the spire of the ivy-covered old church.

In my supreme content, I neither observed the equestrians before us nor heard the sound of hoofs rapidly advancing from behind, until Aunt Lydia, in the seat at our back, exclaimed :

"I declare, Charles, here is Mr. Frank Fairclough !—I understood you would not be able to leave Leeds for a fortnight ?"

This latter was an interrogative addressed to that individual, who checked his horse to shake hands with us all.

"So I thought," was his prompt reply. "But, you see, there is an all-powerful magnet to draw me hither."

"And I thought," murmured Alicia, in a tone meant only for his ear, "there was no magnet potent enough to draw Mr. Frank Fairclough from duty to pleasure."

"Thanks for your good opinion, Miss Proctor. I am drawn to duty and pleasure both on this occasion," was the response, given with more emphasis than I saw any reason for at the time.

He raised his hat from his wavy brown hair, urged his glossy chestnut horse forward, and in less than three minutes was by Amy's side.

We were near enough to perceive that his appearance in our midst was unwelcome to one of our party. Oscar Bergheim's palpable start, as Frank saluted Amy, caused his horse, a frisky bay, to swerve and plunge, to the additional annoyance of the rider, who, unused to the saddle, had not too firm a seat.

The episode was soon over, and we drove on, little recking how dangerously Oscar chafed at the want of self-command which he had exhibited before Amy and his cooler rival, and which the sudden exhilaration of the fair lady's spirits did not tend to subdue.

I was assisting Miss Proctor and Aunt Lydia to alight when they dismounted, or I might have trembled as Amy did on seeing Oscar's black brows come down over his flashing eyes, when, with a smiling "Come, Frank !" she put her arm through her lover's as a matter of course, to be helped up the rough pathway, so long, at least, as it would hold two abreast. The vindictive look sobered lively Amy on the instant. Would that I had had the same warning !

The ride and the fresh air had sharpened us for luncheon. The three equestrian graces came forward, in their closely-fitting jaunty jackets, to help Frank and myself to unpack delicate comestibles with which only feminine hands could deal. Oscar, Halgarth, and his friend Jackson ran to and fro between the hampers in the cave and the tablecloth on the grassy plateau, where Aunt Lydia presided over the arrangements.

Gradually we fell into our places, with little confusion but much laughter. There was a popping of corks, a plopping of wine into glasses, a rattle of cutlery and crockery, small talk and badinage, and all went merrily.

Oscar, who sat between Miss Halgarth and Amy, was apparently more than usually buoyant and agreeable ; but he drank an unusual quantity of wine, and I, sitting opposite, by the side of Alicia,

observed that he visibly winced whenever Amy addressed Frank, whose place on the grass was in close proximity.

Luncheon over, Aunt Lydia retired to the cave for a nap on a pile of carriage cushions; baskets, satchels, and hooked sticks for pulling branches within reach were appropriated, and the party, in straggling pairs, strayed down the path to the copse below, ostensibly in quest of hazel-nuts and blackberries.

A natural affinity seemed to draw Alicia and myself together. I was carefully guarding her down the rocky path, when the voices of Oscar and Frank in loud altercation above painfully arrested our steps.

"Resign the lady, sir!" thundered Oscar Bergheim.

"Not to any man; certainly not to *you*," was Frank's emphatic reply, in which evidently lurked a covert sarcasm.

"I have the prior claim——"

"And I have the authorized right."

There was the sound of a blow, followed by a scream from Amy.

The nature of the path had retarded our return. We reached the platform to see Aunt Lydia (roused from her nap) and Amy, white as snow, wringing their hands, and the two men struggling as for life or death on that limited arena.

Jock and his fellows, apparently benumbed, were afraid to interfere.

They were locked together, swaying to and fro perilously near the cliff.

Once before, in bygone years, those two had fought, and Oscar had won an easy victory. Now they were better matched. What Oscar had in size and weight, Frank had in agility and nerve.

They held each other in a vice-like grip, regardless alike of Amy's piteous appeals or my entreaties. Backwards and forwards they swayed, when to our horror the treacherous earth gave way under Oscar's feet, and he fell, crashing through the light branches of a giant elm (which towered above the copse, and swept the face of the cliff) dragging Frank with him, and scaring a pair of crows from their ragged nest.

There was a moment's awful stillness. Amy had fainted. Lucy was speechless with terror in the copse below, whence distant voices answered ours.

"Thank God! They have not fallen to the foot of the crag!"

I ventured to look over. A jutting shelf of rock, overgrown with rank vegetation, had providentially broken their descent midway; and there they lay motionless, Frank uppermost.

Were they dead?

Whilst we on the platform above were consulting how to reach them, Alicia, with the help of Jock, had loosened the cords from our hampers, and knotted them into a stout rope; but it was not

sufficient to peril another life upon. To scale the precipitous rock was still more hazardous.

I was slight and lithe of limb, and, though unskilled in athletic games, could climb a tree or scale a cliff with any man. I saw that the large boughs of the grand tree through which the foes had crashed still overhung the rocky ledge.

It is a marvel I kept my footing as I flew down the unequal path to gain the tree below. In an instant coat and hat lay on the ground, and my limbs clasped the great bole of the tree. It was a tough ascent, but I mounted steadily to a strong arm above the level of the ledge. Along this I crept as far as it would bear, then grasped it with both hands, and with a swing landed by the side of my prostrate friends.

My example was infectious. I had barely ascertained that both were living than I was thankful to find Halgarth at my elbow.

"Fairclough is reviving," said he. "The sprinkling of that tiny cascade has done the poor fellow a service. Your friend Bergheim's case is more serious. I wish we had some brandy."

Brandy, thanks to Alicia's forethought, was being lowered from the cliff. The stimulant restored Frank to consciousness; but on Oscar neither water, brandy, nor the removal of Frank's pressure had any visible effect.

A welcome emissary from below in the person of Jock. He bore one end of a thin line by which we hauled up a stronger one, then cartsheets and blankets (from a farm close by) already formed into hammock litters. Into the first of these we placed Frank, whose ascertained injuries were a broken wrist and a sprained ankle; and, by using the giant bough as a crane, we contrived to lower him to the anxious group beneath.

We had a much more arduous and hazardous task with Oscar, from his weight and utter helplessness; placed as we were on a ledge where there was barely room for the three to stoop or stir. A groan, as we lifted him into the second litter, was the only token of sensibility he gave.

How different was the slow, sad procession homewards from that which had left Clevedale in the morning! My agony is not to be described. We were bearing back my guest, perchance to die beneath my roof; my sister's lover lamed and injured; my tender-hearted Amy scarcely in full consciousness; and I seemed to hold in my breast the pain of all.

(To be concluded.)

THROUGH HOLLAND.

THE greater number of people, we may presume, who visit Holland, pay their respects to the capital, and all its quaint sights and sounds. Few, comparatively speaking, extend their experiences to the small town of Zaandam, famous as having once been the abode of Peter the Great. This visit may be made by canal; a mode of travelling at all times to be preferred in this country to the more ordinary and familiar, but not very much more speedy, train. Carefully and minutely, therefore, I made every necessary inquiry of the portier of the Bible Hotel with regard to times and seasons, rules and regulations; how much could be seen and done in one day; what conveyances dovetailed one with another.

The portier in the Dutch hotels is a very important personage. It is not certain that he ought not to be written in large capitals: it is quite certain that I err against his dignity in omitting him a capital letter to begin with. He thinks himself of far more consequence than the landlord. The hotel might get on without the one; it is clear to every reasonable person that it would come to grief without the other. He is an institution; a limited liability company: combining directors, subscribers, capital, and dividends in his own person: the capital coming out of the public, the dividends passing into his own pocket.

At the Bible Hotel the portier was no exception to the rule. His dress was a uniform of green cloth decorated with brass buttons, and a smart cap with a gold band. In most of the hotels the portier is paid by the fees he receives from visitors, not by the landlord. This, as a rule, makes him officiously civil; anxious to do five hundred little things for you that you would far rather do for yourself; ready to volunteer information on various subjects in which, to say the least of it, you are as well posted as he. He is the Hall Porter, and takes care to let you know it. On leaving the hotel, where, perhaps, you have stayed twenty-four hours, and have not had occasion to exchange as many words with the servants, he will approach you, and, touching his cap, announce himself as follows:—"Sir, I am the portier," in such tones and with such an air and a grace as would have given dignity to: "Sir, I am the Shah of Persia."

The most officious in this respect was the portier of the Bath hotel, Rotterdam. His civilities bordered on impertinence. He of the Bible hotel was a great man in his way, but intelligent withal, and not too persevering. He flourished about his work in a large diamond ring, of which he seemed especially vain. With that and

the gold lace upon his cap and the brass buttons upon his coat, one felt almost constrained to assume a species of drop-down-deadness of manner on approaching him that must have been peculiarly gratifying to the weaker elements of his nature. But the diamond ring was a questionable investment. How were you to summon up courage on leaving to offer a gratuity, large or small, to a gorgeous official who sported a costly bauble with as much sangfroid as if it were mere paste? The courage never would be forthcoming on such occasions, but that these people have a way of meeting you halfway in the difficulty peculiar to their craft: a mesmeric undercurrent, as veiled, as subtle, but as certain, as a Freemason's sign.

Of this magnificent institution, I ascertained that a steamer started for Zaandam early in the morning. It would be possible to spend a couple of hours there, and proceed to Alkmaar. Abundance of time would still remain to see that place and return by train to Amsterdam for the table d'hôte. Wherever you go, par parenthèse, landlord, waiters, portiers, the whole establishment; will plot, plan, and contrive, will all combine to get you back again in time for their state dinner; and, with a concealed cunning which does honour to the clique, whatever reflection it may cast upon human nature, they will make it appear that this anxiety is all on your own account and for your own good. Your very life might depend on your presence at the table d'hôte.

The information given by the portier seemed to promise sufficient work for one day, and on a certain fine morning I left the hotel for the quay, whence the boat started. A goodly company of country people, in various costumes, were on board. With a tolerable freight we steamed away across the basin of the Y. Now we saw Amsterdam from one of her very best points of view. The high red roofs and gables of the houses, with their white window-frames, were distinctly and quaintly outlined against the grey early morning sky. The steeples of the church towers reared their heads in various directions. To the right was the large fat dome of the Lutheran church; a building that puzzled me for some time. Beyond was the smaller dome of the palace. All this, seen at a coup d'œil, had a most striking and picturesque effect. Nearer was the water, the many boats, barges, and vessels, of all colours, and gay with flying streamers, the sailors and others going to and fro. The trees, the distant hum of the waggons and traffic of the city; the various bells ringing for the departure of steamers, completed a most animated scene.

About an hour's journey across the waters of the Y landed us at Zaandam. Its appearance on first approaching was quaint and primitive: an impression by no means disturbed on a more intimate acquaintance. Small detached houses, painted a bright green with red roofs, peeped out on the banks of the water and amidst the trees. Opposite the landing-stage a larger building was easily identified as an hotel or café—the only one of which the place can boast.

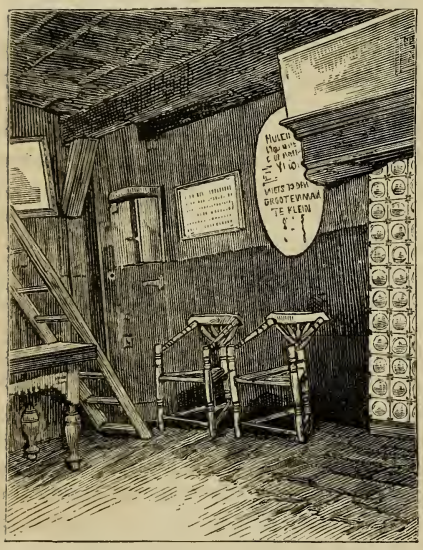
Zaandam is a most curious town, if town it may be called. It rather resembles a large straggling village than a borough possessing a mayor and corporation. Once here you feel yourself completely cut off from the civilised world. The place abounds in windmills of all shapes and descriptions, some of them of immense size. They are used for purposes as various as the humour of their architecture. Grinding corn, draining land, sawing timber, crushing rapeseed, reducing stones to sand, chopping tobacco into snuff, grinding colours for the painter. Throughout Holland the intelligent traveller must not imagine that all the windmills he sees are used for the mysterious transformation of corn into flour. A large proportion of them are employed in the less dignified but very necessary labour of draining the water from the land. As a rule, they may be distinguished from each other. The flour mills generally have a balcony running round half-way up; the draining mills are smaller, and have no balcony.

There are 400 mills at Zaandam, and some of the owners are said to be millionaires. Yet in going through the place, the ruling impression is one of respectable, well-to-do poverty rather than anything else. The houses are small and insignificant, and apparently such as only the humbler classes would occupy. Possibly, larger and better houses concealed themselves in the background: greatness is ever modest: I did not observe them. Yet many of these small houses, it is said, contain curiosities of china and old carved furniture that would delight the heart of an antiquary or drive him mad with envy. This information was volunteered by the guide. I cannot say that I saw any of these rarities; but the opportunity was denied me. Once only I ventured to go up to an inviting-looking window in my wish to gather some slight idea of a Dutch interior at Zaandam. But, no sooner had I discovered the angle at which the light threw itself upon the room, than up sprang, apparently from a trap door immediately beneath the window, a Dutch doll of a Zaandam vrouw, who, at what she considered my impertinence, commenced a series of grimaces and contortions so hideous, with her face separated from mine by only the pane of glass, that one given to the weakness of fainting must undoubtedly have lost consciousness on the spot. I endeavoured to appease the wrath of the offended dame by politely doffing my hat, and making her a bow deep enough for a court day. The truce failed. My last recollection of her is of a hideously ugly old woman, with a cap that must have been made in the year One, dancing a species of war dance on alternate legs before the window, grinning like Mephistopheles with rage and vexation, whilst the flaps of her huge cap swayed up and down in tuneful rhythm to her motions.

Meanwhile, the guide had looked on with the utmost amusement, gaping and wide-mouthed, as children are wont to gaze at a Punch and Judy show; to which exhibition, indeed, the pantomime bore

some resemblance. He was in the middle of describing the treasures some of the houses contained, and in point of fact it had been at his recommendation that I had reconnoitred the window guarded by this female Dutch griffin. His words were eloquent, but it was yet more impressive to see the turning up of his hands and eyes as he waxed warm in his descriptions. There was the very slightest suspicion of imposture or unreality about him; a thought, however, to be dismissed as uncharitable.

Zaandam is said to hold 12,000 inhabitants. If this be so, they certainly must pack themselves in their houses closely as herrings in a barrel. The place was formerly intersected in all directions by canals; each house was surrounded by a moat; but now many of the moats have been filled up, and where once water flowed there now runs many a road. A much more sensible arrangement. The very aspect of some of these places on a wet day is enough to bring on an attack of rheumatic fever or acute neuralgia; but it is a strange fact that there is here less of cold and rheumatism, and the long list of ailments that may be classed in the same category, than in any other country of Europe. It must be a portion of that wise adaptation to circumstances: that Providential arrangement and overruling of all things for good that is so manifest throughout the whole world: for under no other circumstances would three-fourths of Holland be habitable. The oil-trade is one of the great occupations of Zaandam. The oil mills are said to be well worth a visit by those who are interested and learned in such matters. It is curious to see so many windmills as it were multiplying themselves; bewildering and confusing to the point of vertigo to watch so many sails turning and twisting and twirling about on all sides in monotonous and endless racing.



House of Peter the Great.

On first landing, melancholy marked me for her own in the form of a guide, who, with that cunning amongst them which becomes instinct, very quickly seized upon me as his prey. In most insinuating tones he offered to pilot me to Peter the Great's house. He limped as he walked with a motion more ludicrous than pitiful, and yet got over the ground more rapidly than many a sounder man. Thither

we at once proceeded, as being the first and last curiosity the place could boast of. It is a happy thing for Zaandam that Peter the Great (great in follies and wickednesses as he was in other matters) chanced to spend a short time here in 1697. The fact has brought many visitors to the place it would otherwise never have seen. In those days Zaandam was an important place for shipbuilding, and large vessels were constructed in its yards. This has changed, and only small boats now see the light of day here. Peter worked as a shipwright at Zaandam, and endeavoured to get new ideas and perfect himself in the art of shipbuilding. But the worthy natives stared at him as a curiosity—just as I had stared at the old Dutch griffin. They stared at him to such an extent as to render his sojourn there unpleasant and impossible. He speedily took flight, and returned to the larger dockyards of Amsterdam, where he could work away as a common labourer, and gain all his knowledge without attracting public attention.

House of Peter the Great.

Turning to the left on leaving the landing-pier, the guide passed down by the side of a canal bordered by some very dilapidated-looking huts. They seemed almost ready to fall, and the long uncut grass gave to this part of Zaandam a deserted, poverty-stricken aspect painful to witness. Crossing a small wooden bridge, we soon perceived the zinc-covered curiosity to which we were bound. The hut consists of two small rooms bare of furniture, with the exception of a couple of three-cornered old chairs, a table, and an old bedstead. The walls are adorned with the portraits of Peter the Great and his wife; and if the painter faithfully accomplished his task, the lady must have been less renowned for beauty than her husband for greatness. The walls of the room are covered with the names and dates of persons who have visited the hut. Oblivious of the French proverb, a multitude of folk are guilty of the bad taste of carving their names upon every possible occasion; defacing many a noble monument and recording for ever their own folly. So it was here; and not a few of the records were English. For wherever we see the autographs of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, we may conclude by analogy that they do not form a portion of the French ancienne noblesse or inhabit the exclusive ranks of the

Faubourg St. Germain. Over the large old-fashioned chimney-piece was a marble tablet, erected by the Emperor Alexander in memory of his visit.

The hut is encased in a building erected by the late Queen of Holland, a princess of Russia, just as we place a glass shade over some priceless object of high art. Thus did she take means to preserve a cottage dear to all Russians, as everything connected with Peter the Great is to that people. The hut itself leans excessively in all directions; the floor is uneven, like the little billows of a troubled sea; it is impossible to walk steadily in this apparently land-tossed vessel. You leave the hut, after a five or ten minutes' visit, with all the unpleasant sensations of vertigo upon you. What with this feeling, and what with the inner and outer walls, out of all parallel with each other—the, as it were, wheels within wheels—you quit this curious old place without reluctance, and with peculiar impressions. It takes some moments in the open air to restore equilibrium to the brain, and tone to the paled cheek. To anyone whose time is limited, it is in truth scarcely worth a visit; but it may be recommended to him whose days and months are at his own disposal. It is a good plan to make it a rule to see all you can; remembering that opportunities never multiply and seldom repeat themselves. The hut is constructed entirely of wood: rough old planks nailed together and supporting themselves in most unsoberly fashion. After this, the guide, limping along, but with wonderful speed, took me through the principal streets of Zaandam; crossed a ferry, for which an exorbitant toll was demanded; and finally left me at the café, with a modest request for five times his proper fee.

The interior of the café was in disorder. A shock-headed youth was sweeping the front room, nodding wearily at his task. Judging from his appearance he could not have slept for a week. Another youth was pretending to rub the furniture, but his head rested upon a chair; and if the furniture got rubbed it must have been under the influence of somnambulism. An old woman was flitting about in a dreamy distracted manner, suggestive of aberration of intellect, or too frequent calls upon the resources of sundry black, flat Dutch bottles reposing upon the sideboard. There were no signs of a landlord. I ventured a request for a cup of coffee; wondering whether it would be forthcoming in these apparently enchanted regions. The landlord, they informed me, was asleep; and to my utter vexation—not to mention his—they went and aroused him. When he appeared the mystery was solved. It had been their kermes, and for two nights none of them had thought of bed. He was a pleasant, honest-looking little man; decidedly the best and most civilised specimen I had yet seen in Zaandam. He owned a collection of curiosities. Would the Herr like to see it whilst his coffee was preparing? Only last week an English lord had been there in his yacht, and taken away a whole cabin full of old china.

Here, thought I, prices would be moderate; possibly a few rare antiquities might be picked up for the price of a song. An utter delusion. Go where you will in Holland, in the most out-of-the-way places, as a rule full prices are asked for everything that may be for sale. In many cases the prices are even greatly exaggerated, and the purchaser had need beware. In this instance mine host asked full value for his wares, but no more. He was really what he seemed—an honest man. And to those versed in the mysteries of physiognomy—a gift bestowed upon few, and they far between—it is as impossible for a man to appear honest who is not so in fact, as for the sun to turn backward at mid-day and set at the point of his rising.

In the room containing the curiosities sat an old man at breakfast His meal consisted of a hard crust of bread and a bowl of black, bitter chicory, without milk or sugar. It made one's heart ache to see him. He had been up nearly all night fiddling for the dancers. He looked two centuries old; a veritable figure of Father Time; nothing wanting but the scythe to make it complete. Never before had I seen any figure so expressive of extreme age; of care and sorrow. He looked as if he had passed through, not one, but a hundred lives of grief. There was trouble in his very attitude; in the very look of his long, bony, trembling fingers, in every line of his withered face. Trouble and resignation: a species of *waiting;* waiting for the day when a life evidently marked with misery should be put aside. There he sat, munching his hard bread, an embodiment of patience; supplying the wants of the body, not the demands of appetite: probably he was too poor to attempt the latter. It was impossible to look at him without ejaculating, straight from the heart, "Alas! poor wretch!" Impossible not to wonder what his sensations would be if some night he threw his weary body upon its hard bed, and fell asleep—to awaken in another world. As for the curiosities, I looked at them; but in the presence of that venerable, woebegone figure, and the lesson he brought home so keenly, it was a vain attempt to take any interest in them.

By this time my own coffee had made its appearance in the somewhat dangerous hands of the sleepy youth. A few minutes later and the bell rang for the departure of the Alkmaar boat. This was my signal also. I soon found myself on board, in company with butter-women and pedlars, and country folk of all sorts; a strange gathering; but, one and all, clean-looking, respectable, and picturesque. We could seldom say as much as this out of Holland. Only yesterday I happened to be at the bureau of the Grand Opera—for I chance to be writing these words in Paris—securing a seat for that night's representation. On faisait queue, as the French say, and I found myself in the midst of a crowd of highly respectable-looking Frenchmen. But the odour of garlic amidst them was so overpowering, and the constant and universal habit of clearing the throat so repulsive, that I felt this: If Englishmen, in the days of Wolsey,

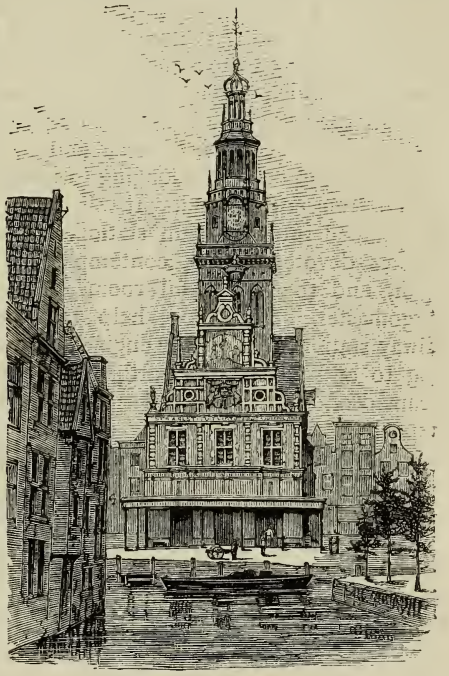
were as Frenchmen are now, the cardinal had good excuse for walking through the streets of London with a sponge held to his nose. I remember nothing of this sort in Holland, a country that makes no pretensions to refinement.

The boat started for Alkmaar. A struggle to get through the small narrow lock—which may be called the Babelmandel of Holland—and away we went. From this stage to some distance onwards, the journey was most interesting. Windmills lined the banks of the canal, and small houses, still painted green with their red roofs, were dotted about. There are red roofs and red roofs. Those in Holland for the most part are of that fine colour, weather-beaten and toned with age: not the bright, modern red, glaring and vulgar, which catches the eye and raises a feeling of exasperation. It was one of the quaintest and most characteristic bits of travelling in all Holland. So Dutchlike, so in accordance with one's preconceived ideas of canal scenery in the Netherlands, that it appeared quite a familiar experience; meeting with an old friend rather than being introduced to a new one: as if all had been seen before in a dream or a bygone existence. It was nevertheless most pleasant and refreshing. The very motion of the water was soothing. Travelling thus seems to be the right and proper thing here; you seem to be veritably in Holland, and to be undergoing novel sensations. Every now and then we stopped at a landing-stage, and discharged passengers or took them on board as the case might be. These small villages looked very isolated; small oases in a desert land. Many of the houses, and even the villages, were old, and quaint, and tottering; so antiquated that they and their people ought to be two centuries behind the great outside world. They had had their day.

Thus we journeyed for some time. Then houses and villages gradually disappeared and were left behind. We passed into a large tract of land bare of all vestiges of habitations: a desert sans oases. The canal was considerably above the level of the earth: and that alone was sufficient to give to the traveller a new and curious sensation. A sudden breach in the banks, and away we should descend; away the water would flood the country. Après ça, le deluge. Tall reeds and rushes grew on either side the banks: as we steamed along they bent gracefully to the quick rippling of the water, and surged and rustled musically as they waved. Now and again we passed a barge or a tiny steamer, towing a large thick rafter of logs of wood fastened together on its way to Amsterdam; where doubtless the logs would be used for shipbuilding purposes. Several turnings in the canal, and presently the quaint steeples of Alkmaar came into view. Before one o'clock the barge and its freight had parted company.

Not a very great deal can be said of Alkmaar to excite the reader. It is a well-built town with much that is modern in appearance. The streets are straight and regular, and wonderfully clean.

This latter feature is its characteristic. It is a very flourishing place, in a quiet way; and the church of St. Lawrence, with its not unmusical chimes, is worthy a visit. It is one of the finest Gothic buildings in Holland, and dates back from the fifteenth century. The exterior of the town-hall, a Gothic building, erected in 1507, is quaint and ancient in aspect: that and the weigh-house in the market-place are almost the only buildings that stand out as curiosities. The date of the latter is 1582. The great trade of Alkmaar is its cheeses. In these it is said to do more commerce than any other town in the world. Many of the Dutch cheeses sold in London come from this wonderfully clean little town. To the English lovers of this edible, therefore, the cleanliness of Alkmaar is an important and consoling reflection.



Weigh House, Alkmaar.

Historically, Alkmaar is of interest inferior only to Haarlem and Leyden. On the 21st of August, 1573, the Spaniards besieged it with a force of 16,000 men. The garrison of the town consisted of only 800 soldiers, besides 1,300 burghers capable of bearing arms. Don Frederic anticipated an immediate capture, in which case he had determined to put every inhabitant to death. But not for the first time was he out of his reckoning. This small body of men defended their city so bravely that at the end of seven weeks the Spaniards had to retire, thwarted in their plans. It was a victory that put fresh life and heart into the Dutch, and seems to be the turning-point in their favour in the history of that invasion.

There is something picturesque and pretty—for Holland—in the neighbourhood of Alkmaar. Its woods and walks are greatly resorted to in the warm summer months. The railway station lies a little beyond the town; and as I entered the waiting-room the few gentlemen, already seated there, saluted me—a practice that seems to prevail in this country. It will appear a strange custom to an Englishman; but it is a problem, perhaps not very difficult to solve, whether these habits of politeness, even amongst total strangers: this immediate recognition

of a universal brotherhood: be not well placed. Whether they are not conducive to that gentle courtesy of manner, that general respect and deference to feeling, of which the English are so singularly deficient; unless they walk in the higher ranks of life, or are men of the world. Men whose privilege it has been to have their prejudices rubbed out and their national traits of reserve and a certain uncongeniality of manner softened down by frequent intercourse with other nations, and the delightful and enlargening influences of travel.

Between Alkmaar and Haarlem we crossed over the great North Sea Canal, a vast undertaking, only recently completed. It is about 15 miles long, and runs from Amsterdam to the North Sea. It varies in width from 65 to 110 yards, and is from 22 to 26 feet deep. The three gates which protect the west entrance of the canal from the inroads of the sea are, one of them 24 yards wide, and the others 12 yards each. It looked a noble and magnificent undertaking as we crossed it, and created a longing to journey down upon its broad fine surface from end to end. It was soon out of sight, and ere long we steamed into Haarlem station. Here we halted five minutes; minutes devoted to the contemplation of the grand, sweet-toned organ, and the wonderful room in the town-hall, and the polite Burgomaster. I could not help going back also to the days when railway stations, and steam engines, and telegraphs, and all this running to and fro on the earth, were marvels as yet unknown, undreamed of: when the luckless inhabitants had to fight against their desperate foes—and, fighting, fell. Memory we are told is retentive and recollective. Certain places and ideas will always conjure corresponding associations: bringing the recollective faculty into operation. Thus it is difficult to look upon an object given to us by a friend dead and gone, without at once thinking of them. It is impossible to visit a haunt frequently trodden with such a friend, without at once walking with an unseen spirit at our side. Once more we hear a long silent footstep, a long-loved voice; tones and expressions come back to us. In the aching heart there has been a moment's rapture: almost a communion of soul with soul. Said a friend to me not long ago: "I one morning gave my sister a poem of Tennyson's to read. Whilst her mind was absorbed in the pages I went to the piano, and, without remark, played a quiet dreamy piece of music, exactly suited to the poem. I ceased when she put down the book. Sometime afterwards she observed to me: 'I cannot tell how or why it is, but whenever you play that one especial piece of music, I at once and involuntarily think of Tennyson's poem.'" Unconsciously she had been influenced by the music as she read the verses: and for ever after the one would be connected with the other. What an idea have we to be worked out here on the influences of good and evil.

With meditation and steam the scene changed from Haarlem to Amsterdam; and so on to the hotel, where the table d'hôte and A.

awaited me: the latter virtuously puffed up into thrice a man at the idea of having spent a hard day's work at sketching whilst I had passed the hours only on pleasure bent.

Our next excursion was to Broek. Everyone who visits Amsterdam feels that he must see Broek. This formidable-looking word is pronounced Brook, with a long oo as in Loo. Why everyone should see Broek it is somewhat difficult to imagine. That it has had more visitors than many another and larger place is certain. We started early one morning. On this occasion A. accompanied me; his industrious fit having suddenly yielded to the temptation of a pleasant drive through the country. We reached the quay just too late for the ferry-boat, which steams backwards and forwards every half hour. At the moment up came a man in an old flat-bottomed tub which had evidently lately carried a cargo of coal. A bargain was soon struck, and he punted us across the long stretch of water which forms the basin of the Y, to the opposite shore. Here was an inn; and in that inn there was a landlady, from whom a carriage had to be hired to convey us to Broek. This landlady was quite equal to her position. She stipulated for an excess of fare, and was deaf to reason. She felt that we were in her power; and this being a case of necessity, was under no law. The matter concluded to her satisfaction, she conducted us to her coach-house. Out of some half-dozen conveyances we choose that which looked the most comfortable: a ramshackle vehicle, which she dignified with the name of Victoria. We all know how this word *sounds* in the lips of a foreigner. The "Victoria" was brought into the yard and quickly made ready. Our coachman was a youth of about 18; but his powers proved themselves quite equal to his task.

The drive, on the whole, was both pleasant and picturesque. For a great part of the way we followed by the side of the canal, and again received the same curious impression from finding ourselves considerably below water level. We passed houses occasionally by the road-side, their red roofs sloping upwards until they were twice the height of the walls that supported them. Once, in the distance, we caught sight of a small town. At the end of an hour and a half's drive, or perhaps somewhat less, we reached Broek. Here, for a short time, we put up at the inn.

The village is certainly curious, and so far interesting. The houses are small and diminutive; most of them—save those facing the water—nestling amidst their own bit of ground, and peeping out from amidst small green trees: bowers, though not of roses. The houses were generally painted green. Whichever way the eye looked it was met by a vision of green. It is said to be the cleanest village in the world, and it looks it. The "ruling passion" of the place was one of extreme cleanliness; of extraordinary neatness and tidiness; as if every day with them was a Sunday; and work and week-days were things unknown. This threw over the village a certain air of

stagnation; almost of unreality. It might have been a deserted village: of the plain certainly, though not loveliest: or one whose inhabitants had been turned into stone. Not a creature was to be seen. All the front doors were hermetically closed; and these are only opened on occasions of a funeral or a wedding. A side door is used at all other times. The very hostess of the inn came to us with an air and a step as if she had just been aroused out of a six month's slumber, and would have exclaimed with the ghost in the play: "Who seeks me at this slumbrous hour?" Yet she looked flourishing and well-to-do, though it was but a small one-storied roadside inn. The heavy gold ornaments about her were massive and costly. In the inner room she had a small collection of old china and curiosities; but her prices, like everyone else's, were large.

We sauntered forth on a visit of inspection. By this time our arrival had been noised abroad. We found ourselves surrounded by the aristocracy of the place—supposing that we take things, like the children in their game, by the rules of *contrairy*. No grown-up men and women—we never saw a man throughout the village, and only here and there a woman peering at us through a window—but a dozen rude little urchins, who came round us, and clung about us, and stared at us as if we had been dancing bears, or some unknown species just landed upon the earth from a passing cloud. A. won their hearts by making them run for small pieces of money: a game they at once entered into with as much energy and understanding as ever the young Arabs of London.

Passing a prim-looking little wooden house, with "Antiquiteiten" marked over the door, a woman suddenly made her appearance. In soft persuasive tones, such as a fowler would address to a bird, if the bird could speak, she bade us enter and inspect her curiosities. We did so. Certainly the collection was large and valuable. Rare, antique carved furniture, real and genuine, and delighting the fancy, stood about. A great deal of old china and other curiosities, all apparently good, crowded her tables and cabinets. On a centre table in the front room was an immense book that I could scarcely have lifted, containing the cards, addresses, and in some cases autographs of some of the illustrious men and women, including crowned heads, of Europe; many in the foremost ranks of England. The woman assured us every one of these names had visited her, and doubtless with truth. In the inner room were a present and testimonial sent to her by the Emperor of Russia in commemoration of a visit to her, and the pleasure it had afforded him. All this was as genuine as it was surprising to find in this out-of-the-way little village, and in this unpretending little house.

The old dame having satisfied her pride in showing up her book of names—in itself a curiosity worth purchasing—next proceeded to business. She exhibited her wares to the best advantage, and, in tones seductive as a syren's, expatiated on their unique beauties.

Here was a milk-jug, there a teapot, elsewhere a set of vases, of transcendent merit, matchless though you scoured the wide world over. But I could not trust that voice. Were I of the new world American, I should have at hand, ready coined, a word to express its quality. She was an excellent saleswoman, as far as perseverance will make one. An old-fashioned silver spoon took my fancy in a moment of weakness. She said it was the last of her old family relics: had been in the family above 300 years. It almost broke her heart to part with it. From what I have since heard her heart must be in a very critical state, for it must almost have broken innumerable times: and her ancestors' stock of silver must have been a weighty responsibility. But the spoon was a good specimen, undoubtedly old: and I brought it away, reserving to myself the privilege

BROEK.

of believing or not its pedigree. One or two pieces of china she also persuaded us into buying were undoubtedly *not* genuine. This was perhaps the only time we were really deceived in our purchases in Holland. The old vrouw's manner had mesmerised us. On all other occasions we were on our guard.

After spending nearly half an hour in this antiquarian abode, we returned to the inn. It was yet quite early morning—not so early but that the old curiosity woman had been up before us—and instead of returning at once, as our intention had been, we continued our journey to Monnickendam, one of the Dead Cities of the Zuyder Zee: about thirty minutes' drive from Broek.

Your first impression on entering Monnickendam is the wonderful desertion and isolation of its streets. It seems to be a city of the dead. For the whole extent of one long thoroughfare we saw not a single person; not a cat or dog; not a sign of life. The street was paved with yellow bricks, the houses were of red brick, and the

Venetian shutters were green. In everything there was studied uniformity. Not a door or window was open; not a face to be seen at any one of them. Broek, after all, was but a village, with few houses: its deserted aspect was not so remarkable. But here was a city of houses, street after street; and its solitude was painful to witness. We first passed the church with its square tower; a fine building of the fourteenth or fifteenth century; its handsome interior bare and whitewashed; its long white windows guiltless of painted glass, cold and vacant in the frigid daylight. Town, church, the entire surroundings, said as plainly as tongue could speak: "We belong to a past age. Our end has come. When the crack of doom goes forth, proclaiming Earth's last day, we shall pass only from stagnation to utter extinction: a death of death." And this is only fact. Monnickendam, like the other dead cities of the Zuyder Zee, belongs to the past. It was once a flourishing city of commerce: one of the twenty great towns of Holland. It is nothing now. Strangers rarely visit it. Such an advent is a cause of wonder and commotion in the little town. So was it with us.

The day was so clear and bright; the sunshine so glowing; the waters of the Zuyder Zee to our right hand so calm and alluring; the island of Marken in the distance so tempting a spot; that it was impossible to resist an effort to reach it. The driver turned down one of the narrow streets leading to the shore, and immediately we were surrounded by a small but gaping crowd. Our carriage, our selves, our very boots and hats, all were inspected with the utmost avidity and curiosity. Had we been cannibals or savages we could not have excited more intense wonder: and it almost seemed, in one or two instances, suspicion. Were we an enemy come to inspect the land? Was Monnickendam about to be sacked and ruined by another invasion of the Spaniards, as in the days gone by? Were we magicians, and would these two harmless bodies suddenly transform themselves into 20,000, and turn the unoffending inhabitants adrift upon the reefs and rocks of the Zuyder Zee?

But amongst them was an old boatman; an honest-looking man, who seemed more civilised than the surrounding aborigines. To him we soon made known our wants, and he undertook to supply them. He owned a capital craft, and he and his partner would carry us over to Marken at a price. Our driver, with the true air of a Simple Simon, assured us the charge was extremely moderate. It seemed to us quite sufficiently so. The boat was inspected, and found satisfactory. The bargain was soon struck. The carriage was despatched to the inn adjoining the church, and away we launched into deep waters.

As we receded from the town its aspect was quaint and interesting; perfectly strange and uncommon. The curious old bridge, the carpenters' yards, where small boats were built, and screws were turned, and planks were planed; the green houses, with their red roofs, and

the green trees interspersed amidst them: all gave to the place a most singular and old-world-like appearance, which caught the eye and arrested the attention. There was an ancient subdued look about all, as befitted a dead city.

The boatmen proved pleasant companions; knowing little of the outside world, but well acquainted with the shoals and sandbanks, rocks and shallows, of the Zuyder Zee. Navigation is here most difficult and dangerous. Frequent storms sweep across this little sea with fury, and then navigation is suspended. Some centuries ago the sea did not exist. There was nothing but a lake, which, by degrees, extended its waters, and swept away forests and land; and so the Zuyder Zee was formed. Now, the Dutch have undertaken the gigantic work of draining a great portion of this sea, by throwing a dyke, twenty-five miles long, across from Enkhuisen to the island of Urk, and from thence to the left bank of the mouth of the Yssel, and pumping out the water. It is estimated that nearly half a million acres will thus be laid bare, of which the greater portion will be available for cultivation. The whole is to be completed in sixteen years, at a cost of £10,000,000. They who wish to see the Zuyder Zee in its entirety, therefore, must not delay their journey.

A feeling of solitariness and utter desolation immediately took possession of me: some such terrible feeling as that which takes hold of you when compelled for a time to sojourn in intimate contact with a people with whom you have not one sympathy in common. A. felt nothing of this: could not understand it. The island, in every sense of the word, seemed detached from the world. Huts were scattered here and there, as if by chance: no streets, no regularity; rough steps of mud or stone, or a mingling of the two, led into the interiors. Narrow lanes or pathways, between houses so close together that you could touch both sides with your elbows as you walked, conducted from one place to another. In these narrow defiles the pavement was a thick layer of mud. Plenty of mud everywhere, but as yet no cleanliness. Nothing to indicate anything beyond poverty; an almost brutish ignorance of the common usages of life. Such was a first impression. One of the boatmen constituted himself our guide, and soon after we landed took us into a small cottage. The place was terribly dirty. Round the walls were arranged a few Delft plates. An old Dutch clock ticked in a corner, marking the slow-moving hours to a people to whom time could be but a stagnant stream. The floor was of hard clay. A small round table near a window, a few rough chairs, completed the furniture of the room. Near the table a woman sat, mending an old garment. Her aspect almost frightened one. Her clothes were dirty and untidy; her hair streamed about her face and neck, straight and stiff, as if it had never been dressed all the days of her life. The expression of her face was almost idiotic; it indicated the lowest grade of intelligence to which human nature can descend. This was increased by a vacant

grin, put on when we entered, doubtless as a kind of welcome. It did not increase or relax when spoken to; not a muscle moved. Her attitude also never changed or stirred. She seemed shy with the shyness of a young child, who either will not speak when spoken to, or stares you blankly in the face, or hides its head in its mother's lap. Not a word could be extracted from her. Three children were about her, little savages in appearance, devoid of intelligence. In a rough wooden cradle by her side was a young baby, done up in some marvellous fashion, and, like its surroundings, dirty withal.

We soon quitted the hut, and this first impression of Marken was so painful that I felt inclined to turn back to the boat at once. The guide, however, assured us this was one of the worst specimens: better was to come. Wise man! he had kept the best to the last.

Marken is divided into two parts. It cannot be called upper and lower, as both are on a level: or lesser and greater, as both seem of a size. One portion is better off and more flourishing than the other, and so far it may be classified into major and minor. The church is in the one half and the cemetery in the other. The two sets of people had quarrelled when we were there, so that each was deprived of religious rites. That is to say: the inhabitants of the one half were unable to go to church on a Sunday, and the people of the other half could not bury their dead. It is to be hoped they have by this time adjusted their differences.

Walking, we soon reached the cemetery. It was an untidy, uncared-for little place, with little about it suggestive of the sacredness with which we like to think of the spot where rest the dead: a small, enclosed mound, which delighted A. from the number of death's heads and cross-bones that had managed to struggle to the surface of the ground instead of remaining beneath it in peace. He proceeded to give me, doubtless, a most learned and interesting lecture upon the position of the various bones in the body; and ended by pocketing half a dozen of them as a great prize and cheerful souvenir of Marken. We went on across a strip of green, flat common, and ahead of us saw two urchins approaching, bearing pitchers. As soon as they caught sight of us they turned tail, and took to flight as though we had been the dead resuscitated.

Presently, after twisting about amidst small turnings, we entered another hut. Here was a change indeed, and a remarkable one. The woman got up and bade us heartily welcome. She was dressed in a clean, picturesque costume, with ornaments about her. Her looks and conversation were highly intelligent. The cottage contained many marks of thrift and even wealth in a small way. One or two carved oaken wardrobes or cabinets, in the very best style: old things of Queen Elizabeth's date that would fetch almost any price in a London market. Everything was freely open to our inspection. Amongst other things the old woman—she informed us with pride that she had long and long been a grandmother—brought out some

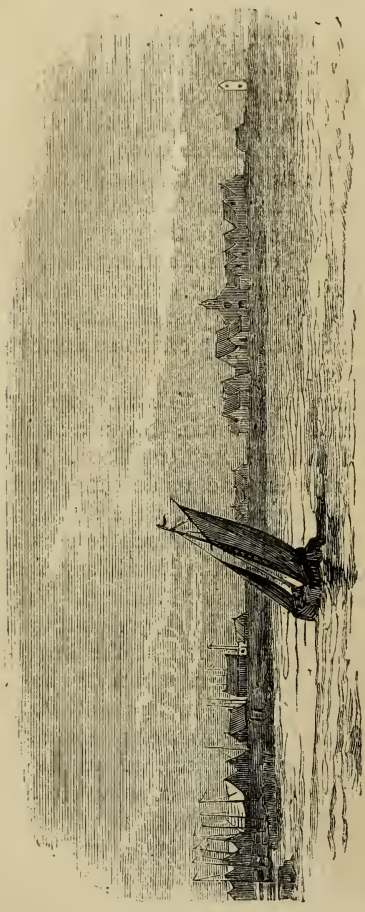
curious, ancient, and valuable silver spoons. Here indeed would be trophies worth carrying away in remembrance of Marken: something far better than death's heads and cross-bones. But everyone to his particular fancy. I fell in love with them at once, and asked her if she would sell one of them. The good dame almost collapsed on the spot, though the offer was taken in good part. Sell them! Sell her spoons! heirlooms! Then followed a string of ejaculations, each one stronger than the last, and all meant to assure me that the Zuyder Zee might swallow up the island; the world might be burnt by fire; the skies might fall; but never, never could she sell her spoons. Such a thing had never been heard of. The guide afterwards explained that these people would almost as soon part with life as with their silver and their furniture and their old family relics, which have been handed down from one generation to another: and are as much prized by them as are the heirlooms of the great.

Before we left, the old woman's husband came in, and sat down to some nets he was mending. What an interesting old couple they made! how picturesque was the whole interior! Just the subject for a painter such as Israel, who contrives to throw expression so wonderful into his old people and rude interiors.

We left the hut reluctantly, but time pressed. Turning, we got into the centre of the village, and entered the church. It was a small, plain building, in much disorder and a dilapidated condition. The water came in at the roof in small showers, and made little pools upon the floor and the benches. Wooden horses were scattered about, drying clothes. Evidently they put their church to secular uses on week-days. It would almost seem that the Dutch associate little that is reverential with their sacred buildings *as* buildings. Very few men were about. Those we saw were dressed in sailors' costumes. A brown knitted vest, and wide knickerbockers tied at the knees; thick black or blue woollen stockings, and wooden sabots or shoes. These sabots are taken off the feet before entering a hut; so that, as at a Turkish mosque, you may generally know how many people are inside by the number of sabots at the door. The women, unlike so great a portion of Holland, do not conceal all their hair. It frequently hangs down on either side the face in a long, thick curl. It did so with many that we saw. The head-dress is a large, white embroidered paraphernalia, lined with coloured material, and worn in the shape of a huge dunce's cap or bishop's mitre: something between the two: rounded, not pointed, at the summit. They wear a brown or chintz corsage, and a short dark petticoat, which shows off to admiration the pretty feet and ancles of those happy enough to possess them.

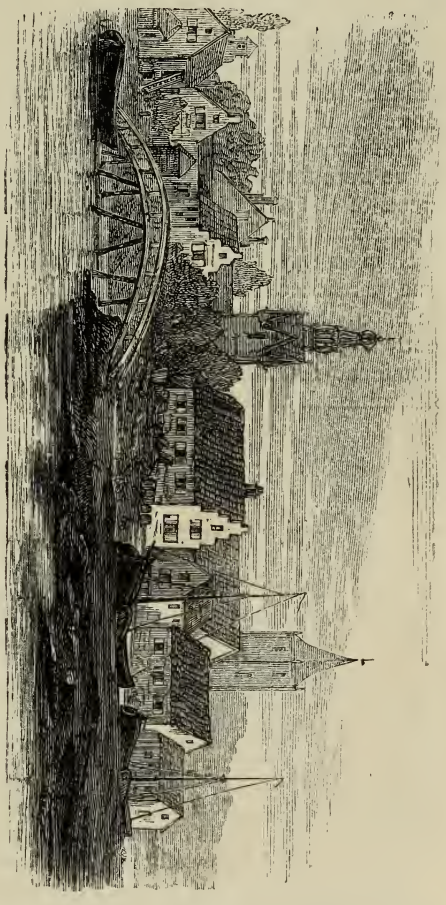
The population of the island is about 900. The men are fishers, and pass the greater portion of their days upon the water. They live a quiet, peaceable, respectable life; and are thrifty and in comfortable circumstances. On the whole, we were pleased and gratified with our

visit to Marken. A more complete change from our everyday experience, our impressions of things whether at home or through Holland, could not be met with. As new a phase of life as could be found at the far end of the globe. Here exist a small tribe or colony of people separated by only a short extent of sea from the mother country; and yet as completely distinct as if a hundred times the distance divided them. Primitive and characteristic, picturesque, simple, and thrifty; their few wants abundantly supplied by their industry; a well-filled stocking, moreover, reposing in the chimney corner; no beggar known amongst them; an instance of quiet, contented lives; their short and simple annals read us a lesson not very difficult of application. True, a quarrel was going on between the two villages at the time of our visit; but all social horizons, like the fairest skies, are occasionally obscured by clouds. It was an event so rare amongst them that its very novelty was no doubt its greatest charm. Ill-feeling could not long prevail in this peaceful community. Probably by the following Sunday the natural ventilators of the church would be wafting the cap-strings and stirring the rude locks of the two societies. The dead would obtain decent burial. A general reconciliation would cement all parties more closely together than ever. On Sunday night, according to their custom, the lights would be burning in the windows till past midnight, shining from a distance like earth stars. Then the whole population would go down in a body to the port. The men would embark in their boats, put out to sea, and pass the week in fishing. The women would return to their week's widowhood, their children, their home occupations. Until another Sunday coming round should bring the good men back again; husbands, sons, and brothers; who had been toiling for six days upon the deep. So history repeats itself. How variously our lives are



ISLAND OF MARKEN.

appointed. How little one half the world knows of the other half. Suddenly transplant these people into the midst of a crowded Drawing-room, where fair dames and damsels in glittering jewels and rustling trains pay their homage to majesty, and what would be their impressions? A bewildered gaze: awe, turning to confusion of mind; a whirling of the brain: a prayer to return to their huts and island ere they died at the sight.



MONNICKENDAM.

We left the island as we had come. The men hoisted the sail, and away we went. But wind and tide were not in our favour. It took us a long time to get back. Gradually the island, in the setting sun, turned to a broad band of gold. It burnished the roofs of the huts, and gilded the little tower of the church. Flaming clouds scattered themselves over the sky, which began to look portentous but grand and sublime. Streaks of crimson threw themselves about. The grey of the sky in the north turned to deep violet. The whole surrounding colouring of sky and earth was magnificent. The sea corresponded in tone, and the ripples of the water caught up the reflection and broke it into a thousand gems, more beautiful and sparkling than those of an Eastern monarch. As we neared Monnickendam a bank of dark clouds gathered themselves together and threw a dark gloom over all. All the points of the curious, time-worn town were subdued and softened by the fading light. The whole population seemed to have turned out to see us land. The little wooden bridge was crowded with gazers: we trembled for its life. Bidding our boatman farewell, and escorted at a respectful distance by a motley group, we reached the hostelrie at which our one-horse conveyance had taken refuge. It was

a long ride back again. The canal at our side looked cold and treacherous in the waning light. When at length we came in darkness to our destination, forth issued the old landlady. With tones and gestures worthy a better stage and more crowded audience, she demanded what the gentlemen meant by bargaining for a carriage to Broek—her beautiful Victoria, too !—and taking it on to Monnickendam ? Of course they must pay double. The privilege or trouble of contending was not left to us. Unwarily I had given the dame a note to change. Quietly she put it into her pocket, and with a wise shake of the head intimated that she was master of the situation. However, if she was satisfied, so also were we.

The ferry-boat was on the point of starting for Amsterdam. So far we were fortunate. It quickly steamed us across. The bustling streets of the old town looked strange and confusing after our late experience. The lights dazzled. Everything wore a cheerful aspect. Each in its way, we moralised, and all things in their place. In due time we reached the hotel and the well-earned rest of our rooms. Again we noted the old alchemist burning the midnight oil : bending intently over a bright fire that lighted up his grey hairs and his pale prominent features. Without doubt this had been one of our pleasantest days in Holland. CHARLES W. WOOD.

NE JUDICATE SECUNDUM SPECIEM.

O ye who oft another blame,
Of judgment rash beware ;
What know ye of the way he came,
Beset with many a snare ?

Ye see the tokens of his strife,
The wanderer's travel-stains,
And deem it but a worthless life
That honour never gains.

How often merit, here on earth,
Is measured by success ;
How oft the gift held nothing worth
Of Nature's nobleness !

Judge not another, though he stand
With those the world doth ban ;
They hope for mercy from His hand
Who judgeth not as man :

Yea, one as dross accounted here,
His virtues undescried ;
May prove hereafter, shining clear,
Gold in the furnace tried ! M. T.

LAURA'S LOVE.

BEHOLD a purple-shadowed and still autumnal day. The air is full of the shaken glory of red and yellow falling leaves; the birds chirp plaintively in the hedges; in the silent orchards here and there a rose-red apple nestles in the short, crisp grass, while a bee sucks at its decaying heart.

In the fragrant coolness of a dim, old-fashioned room, in a dim, old-fashioned house, beyond the busy life of the town built on the sea, two people are waiting. The windows on one side overlook the river; while, on the other side, the sea to which the river flows lies like a stately and serene lake to-day, fed by the waters of sweet running Life.

These two people, who are both young, and of opposite sex, are reading from a book of old Italian sonnets. Or, rather, the girl is reading: *he* did but look at the pages to please her. Her bright golden head is bent above the mystic page; her lovely blue eyes follow the inspired lines: but her companion's eyes are fixed on her. It is evident that in the dawning rapture of that fair, down-drooping face he finds a tenderer sentiment, a theme for song more rapturous than poet ever sung.

"Fifteen years!" The young girl shuts her book on a sudden, and turns with a look half-grave, half-playful to her companion. "Ah! that was a lover! Old, forsaken, sad, and still faithful! Can you tell me, Jack, why we have no lovers like Petrarch nowadays? What man, in these modern times, would remember a woman fifteen years after parting from her?"

"What are you saying?—Petrarch! Laura's Petrarch?" and Mr. Jack Chester lifts himself from his careless attitude to answer. "Are you sure, Miss Laura, that Petrarch was a lover such as ladies love; or was he only a sentimental, passionless verse-writer, with a greater liking for the fame his sonnets brought him than for his mistress's smile?"

A lovely tinge spreads itself over Laura's face. "Don't be malicious, Jack! Of course he was a perfect lover; faithful, tender, true. Why are there none like him now? Do you know of one, Jack—a single one? If you do, point him out to me."

"Shall I? Do you put me to the test? You have just been reading here that Petrarch waited for fifteen years for a smile from Laura. What if I tell you that Lauras are too ready now to give their smiles when Petrarch comes," returns Mr. Jack Chester, with a waking fire kindling in his handsome dark eyes as he speaks.

Laura Rochester hastily turns away her face; and, turning so, she

hides the faint rose-colour that, whether she will or no, answers to the call of those passionate eyes in her tender cheek.

"May be!—may be!" she sighs. "May be that you are right, Jack. If Laura does not call, then Petrarch will not answer. Heigh-ho! My name is Laura, too." She clasps her little hands above her golden hair, and sits looking dreamily out over the sea. "My name is Laura, and I have been waiting nineteen sweet, short years for Petrarch. But he has not come; he has not yet come."

"Has he not? Are you sure?" Jack Chester turns, leaning breathlessly towards her, and fixing his dark eyes, so full of some present passion, upon her changing face. "Are you sure of that, Laura?"

"If he has, I did not recognise him," she returns, with a forced, uneasy laugh. "I shall know him when he comes," she finishes gravely; "be sure of that!"

"His kissing, like Orlando's, will be as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread," quotes Jack, impatiently rising. "Petrarch's Laura! —Who was she, forsooth? Bah! it makes me sick to think of her. A woman without passion, or intellect, or soul. Too narrow of mind to estimate at its true worth the love which, as they vaunt, he proffered her; too selfish to respond to it as a woman of grander intellect would have responded. I tell you I despise her, and all like her."

"Jack! Jack!" interrupts Laura's timid voice, as Laura stretches out a deprecating hand to this aroused lion, who is pacing up and down his cage in some desperate anger.

Jack breaks into a cruel laugh as he goes on. "Yes! your name is Laura, too, and you are like her. You, too, wear a green dress. You have the same sort of wavy, pale gold hair that the other Laura had, and the same maddening, mocking way of casting down your eyes, when it suits you. You are waiting for your Petrarch: well, I will bring him to you. He is here ready-made to your hand, and has been filling the woods and valleys with his sighing these many days."

"Has he?" responds Laura, who is evidently used to Jack's raging moods, and so pays little attention to them; nevertheless, she is a little uneasy this evening—consciously so. "Why have you not told me before? Who is he? What is his name?"

"Have I not told you his name is Petrarch? Though, to the world without, he is ingloriously known as Claude Montrose. He is a painter as well as a poet, and as poor as a church mouse. You would like him to come here; you would like him to sing himself into favour."

Jack is leaning against the casement, and looking out with gloomy eyes upon the sea-beat beach, around which the water washes lazily. He does not see the tender blush that rises and deepens and makes Laura's face so like a rose in June as he mentions that name with his careless scorn. "Claude Montrose! Claude Montrose!"

"I—I—meet him sometimes," she says, in semi-bravery. What right has Jack to take her to task?

Jack wheels swiftly around. "Oh! do you? And where, pray?"

"In the woods. He often walks there; he comes to the Ravine, sketching."

"And he has written you a poem? Oh, yes, of course he has!" Jack cries, hitting the truth at once. "A sweet sonnet; a catalogue of charms, such as he has, doubtless, written to fifty other damsels in the course of his life. What are poets good for if they can't write verses for every pretty face that chances to flash across their way?"

"And what if he has, pray?" cries Miss Laura, her pink nostrils beginning to quiver with wrath. "If he chooses to write me a poem, and if I choose to accept it, what is that to you? What right have you to make objections or sarcastic remarks?"

"None! none whatever," groans Jack. "He has a right, if you choose to give it to him, and I am a fool!—a fool! I ask your pardon for my rude speeches."

Laura does not answer. There is silence for a moment. Silence which is broken in an unexpected way.

"What is the trouble?" demands a clear voice close by, as a lady, entering by the glass doors, advances toward the angry couple. "What nonsense is this that I hear you both talking?"

She looks from one to the other inquisitively. But Laura, glad of the interruption, glad to get away, springs up and sweeps a magnificent curtsey to Jack: who is looking at her with half-angry, half-adoring eyes.

"It is no nonsense at all, Anna. Jack won't believe in Petrarch. Fare you well, fair gentleman."

With another swimming curtsey to him, Laura disappears. They hear her, a moment after, playing some old, soft, sad music in another room. Jack listens to it pathetically, the eager anger dying out of his face.

"You foolish young man," says Miss Rochester, scornfully. "How many times have I warned you of your temper? Why will you not be wise?"

"Wise!" Jack wakes up out of his dream. His face grows fierce and stern. "It would be wise of me to forget her. I'm tired, for my part. She takes me up and flings me down at her pleasure. I give it up. Let him win her who can."

Anna Rochester smiles disdainfully. "And why can't you win her, you impatient man? Don't you know that it's not any one of you, but a sentiment, that she is in love with? You are big, and strong, and full of fiery life, with plenty of money; but you have no poetry within you. Just because that's what she is full of, poetry, she is taken with this artist, who writes a few stanzas to her, and sighs and talks of his aspirations and his poverty. You must bear with the mood, Jack; it will come all right for you in time."

Jack made no answer. He was listening to the music. Miss Rochester thought him indifferent, and proceeded to pay him out.

"I saw her on the bridge from my balcony-window yesterday; she was talking with Claude Montrose. She will go again to-day, and he will chance to meet her—of course."

Jack turns pale as he listens. "Well, God bless her! whoever wins her. She is worthy of any man's love. God bless her, I say, even though I lose her." And, pulling his hat over his brows, he walks dejectedly away through the open windows.

"Ah, well, too! Will it not be kind,
That rest from life, from pleasure and from pain,
That rest from bliss we know not when we find,
That rest from Love which ne'er the end can gain?
Hark, how the tune swells, that erewhile did wane!
Look up, Love! ah, cling close and never move:
How can I have enough of life and love?"

Miss Rochester looked after him, knitting her brows. She was Laura's elder sister and protector, and she loved her very much, and wished for her happiness—only she wanted her to be happy in her own way. And that way would be to marry Jack. Jack was good, and rich, and everything that was eligible; and not until this Claude Montrose appeared (who was a Scotchman, but had been reared abroad by his Italian mother in all the poetry of Italy) did Miss Rochester doubt but that all would go well. To suffer Laura to drift into an engagement with this beggarly artist, who earned his bread by his pencil, would indeed be a cruel mistake.

Down in the fragrant recesses of the river's ravine, evening's cool wings are slowly fanning the light away. Dusky shadows wrap themselves about the stalwart trunks of trees, though the sunshine still lingers on their red and yellow tops. Sometimes the wind coquettishly blows apart the clustering leaves, and shows patches of blue sky.

The river here goes ravening along, snatching at the alder roots and blue-flag flowers. On the bridge that spans it, a gentleman leans with folded arms, and with the air of one who waits the advent of some loitering comrade. Suddenly looking up, his face flushes and brightens gladly. He is a tall, slender, good-looking young man; not half so strong as Jack Chester, but with a most refined face. Walking quickly to the path, he meets a lady who comes shyly forward.

"How long you have kept me, Laura," he says with sweet chiding as he takes her hands. "I thought you were not coming at all."

"Did you?" she answers faintly, looking up at him with eyes that have the soft gloom of beautiful purple pansies. "Perhaps I ought not to have come, after all," she finishes shyly.

In answer, he lifts the little white hands he is holding to his lips; then he points back, with a smile, along the narrow rocky path by which she came to him. It is all strewn with fallen dead leaves.

"See!" he says. "Do you know what they make me think of?

"'The kisses of her feet
Along the earth a dying path have made.'

Dear dead leaves? How bright they are. How like the French woman who put rouge on her cheeks to meet Death as a beauty should."

Claude Montrose draws Laura's hand in his arm, and so leads her back to the bridge.

"May I tell you," he begins eagerly, "that after you left me here yesterday, I thought of you, and nothing but you, all night long."

Laura's face grows to be more than ever like a summer rose. "Did you?" she murmurs again.

"And then I pictured you, just as you were in my mind. Here is where you stood, under the leaves, a thing of beauty to be preserved for ever. See! I give it you."

He puts a little sketch in water-colours into her hand. It is a pretty bit: a girl in an autumn day, standing on a green bank. Red and yellow leaves drift on the short, crisp grass at her feet. She holds a bunch of them dropping from her hands, and they lie along the hem of her green dress, glowing like rubies. Behind her, a priest with a pale, sad face, looks out of a doorway, from the shadow of which she just escapes. It is pretty, but sombre.

"Do you recognise it?" Montrose asks eagerly.

"Yes! that is my face, and that is you in the shadow. But why have you made it so sad? The sunshine is all gathered about me, and you are in the dark."

"Is that not fitting?" the poet answers gently. "Is it not fitting that you should have the sunlight, and I the shadow?"

"But I do not like it so," Laura protests gravely, and with a blush. "I should like better to give you part of my sunshine, rather than that all the darkness should fall on you."

A look of dreamy pleasure illuminates the poet's face. "If I were by your side, in the light, darkness would not dare come near me again," he murmurs with sweet flattery.

They stand together, looking over the rail into the river's ravening torrent, as it sweeps along, snatching and snarling. "This is where you stood yesterday," says Montrose. "The sun streamed through the branches, lighting up your hair; the leaves drifted down and lay upon your dress. I remember it as I would a picture in a church. See what I have written."

Laura reads the lines at the bottom of the sketch. They are tinged with a subtle flattery that thrills her through and through. Then a remembrance of Jack Chester's malicious words comes back to her, bringing a sting through the sweetness of the lines. How many times had the poet written like this—to others?

"They are very sweet," she says, with a sudden coldness and gravity, "very musical! I suppose you write so many of them, now to this fair face, now to that one, that they come very easily. It is always much the same thing over again, is it not?"

Montrose's face, as he listens, flushes fiery red. A flame of angry light leaps from his eyes. He snatches the paper from Laura's hand, tears it across and across, and then flings it out into the river.

"Is that what you think, Miss Laura? Is that all you care for it? Let it perish then. Go!"

Laura is silent a moment through sheer amazement. Then she springs forward and grasps his arm. Too late! The river has got her treasure. She will never see it more; on and on it floats, and the waves bear it out of sight to the waiting sea. She turns her passionate, beautiful face upon Montrose. Great tears rise, brimming over her eyes, and drop on her hot flushed cheeks.

"Why did you do that?" she cries. "You had no right; it was mine; you gave it me! How dared you destroy it?"

He is silent; the moment's fierce anger spent, he feels a little ashamed of his spleen. Laura bends over the rail, and her tears drip down and fall into the cool, fresh current below. "Why did you! why did you! You had no right: it was cruel, cruel!"

"I will paint another for you; I did not think you cared so much for it," he says humbly.

"But that will not be this one. You cannot restore this one that you have destroyed—you never can."

"I will paint it over again: I will make it as like as I can," he pleads; "indeed, I will."

The twilight deepens as they linger there; and they turn away. Montrose stays to look after her as she walks across the lawn upon bidding him good evening. Miss Rochester tells her, chidingly, it is too late; she must not stay out after sunset again.

Time creeps slowly on after that. One by one the days slip by, one by one the leaves of autumn fall and make a part of that which has been, but will never be again. Laura is much alone. Her admirers do not trouble her: even Jack does not, the ever faithful. And Claude Montrose, where is he? She is beginning to feel neglected and solitary, when one afternoon a servant brings a message to her room. A gentleman was waiting to see her: and Miss Rochester had gone out.

It is Jack, of course: and Laura hurries down. She sings as she goes; she wears a wavy, light green dress; her pale gold hair is pushed from her forehead; a soft blush is on her cheeks. The visitor is standing within the shadow of the curtain in the dim room as she enters; but it is Jack, of course. And she likes Jack, in spite of his crotchets.

"*One morn I missed him,*" she begins, with a pretty graciousness, as she comes forward with outstretched hands. Then she stops, as

he turns around and shows her Claude Montrose's pale, poet face. It is not Mr. Chester.

"Will you pardon me for calling?" he says, a little humbly. "I wanted to see you so much, after this long absence."

"Pardon you!" Laura stops, with her hands pressed upon her bosom.

"See what I have brought you." He takes a picture from its hiding-place behind the curtain and holds it toward her. "I have been doing it all these days for you."

It is the old picture, the one he destroyed that night, but enlarged, elaborated; made more beautiful a thousandfold.

Laura clasps her hands together in ecstatic gratitude. "Oh, how beautiful; how beautiful!"

"Will you accept it?" Montrose asks eagerly. Then, holding the hand she stretches out to him, the young poet-painter goes on with feverish impetuosity. "Will you let me give all to you, with this? *Art*—Life—Love—Everything! Will you henceforth be my inspiration, as you have been in this? Will you, Laura?" His voice is melody itself as he says this.

Ah! what need to give Laura's answer? Petrarch has come. And so poor Jack loses his prize.

"Why do you always wear a green dress?" he asks; as, hours later, they still sit hand in hand together.

"I—I—wanted to be like Petrarch's Laura," she falters, with a shame rising in her cheeks.

He breaks out, at this, into love-like acclamation. "My darling! my darling!" he cries, as he folds her hands in his with a laugh that is half a sob. "Were I Petrarch truly, then you should be my Laura, and I would hold no fame so sweet as that of winning you."

And he takes his first kiss from her lips before tearing himself away: just escaping the meeting with Miss Rochester, who had been making a long afternoon of visits.

When Miss Rochester sees the picture hanging in Laura's room, she frowns with irritated surprise and disappointment; but she chose to treat it mockingly. "How many times do you suppose he has painted other faces as fair and silly as yours?" she says, with cruel emphasis. "How many other maidens has he written verses to, before you?"

"Not one," Laura retorts bravely. "Not one. Prove that he has if you can, Anna. I should hate him if he had," she adds with a burst of tears.

But Anna Rochester, Jack's stanch friend and supporter, sets herself to see if she cannot find proofs of Petrarch's possible indiscretions. And she succeeds, helped by a curious coincidence.

One day she enters her sister's room with a packet in her hand. She unfolds it, revealing some letters and a picture, which she lays in Laura's lap.

"You have asked me to find proofs," she begins, coming to the point at once. "There they are. Judge for yourself."

"Stop!" cries Laura, starting up, as pale as death. "What do you mean? What are they?"

"I tell you to look and judge for yourself. There are the letters and poems that Claude Montrose wrote, there is the face he painted before ever he saw you. You threw away Jack Chester's love—Jack's—who has always known you and loved you—and you took this man on trust the first summer you saw him. Behold how worthy he is!"

"I don't believe it!" cries poor Laura. "I don't believe it."

The wind bursts open the casement and blows in a whole drift of leaves, that flutter across the floor and settle on her green dress. She always wears a green dress now, like Petrarch's Laura, and her picture is there, on the wall.

"I don't understand this," she gasps, as she scans the letters, and her face has turned whiter than death. "Who is she, Anna? How did you get these? How did you find it all out?"

"No matter how I found it out! I got these letters, which he wrote to her, and the poems and the picture. The dates are there—only a year ago. You see her name is Rosacea. Most likely it was really Rose, but he calls her Rosacea, for he is a poet!"

And with this last cruel thrust Anna leaves the room. Does she tell the whole truth in this matter—the truth and nothing but the truth—or is there a reverse side to the story which Laura does not hear? Who shall know?

Hours after this, Laura Rochester folds up the letters and the proofs, creeps down the stairs like a hunted creature wounded to the death, and enters the room where sit her sister and Mr. Chester. They start at seeing her, she looks so like a ghost; so wan and shadowy in her green flowing dress. Laura feels as though that packet of proofs had killed her. She holds them out to her sister.

"Take them, Anna," she says, catching up a sob. "I have read them, and they have—have hurt me. Perhaps," she breaks out into a dry sobbing, "perhaps it is as well that you gave them to me—but, oh! I can't think so. You might have let me be happy a little longer—a little longer."

She turns to leave the room, and then stops, hearing a footstep without. The hall door is open, and Laura turns to it. Yes! it is Claude! He sees her and comes quickly forward.

"Laura, my Laura!" he cries, reaching out his hands.

But Laura draws back. "Stop!" she says, in a ringing, imperative tone. "How do you presume to call me by that name? *You!*"

Oh, the pitiless, weary scorn in her voice and manner as she says this! For she deems him to be wickedly base and false. Montrose stands still, struck mute by the change in her. She springs back into the sitting-room, takes the portrait from Anna's lap, returns, and holds it out to him.

"Here!" she cries, "take this, and go back to her. At least never dare to come here, or to speak to me again."

He takes the picture, looks at it, and then at Laura, and then to the faces of the two silent witnesses of the scene, who are standing surprised at the open glass doors of the window. "Who has done this?" he cries out indignantly. "What plot is this against me? Laura, do you believe it? Is this your love for me—is this your faith in me?"

Laura, Petrarch's Laura, turns from him with a little moan, goes to the window, and holds out her shaking hands to Mr. Chester.

"Take me away, Jack!—Jack, take me away!" she bursts out, sobbing, and clinging to his fingers. "*You* have been faithful to me. *You* will always care for me."

And Jack, with a little pang of tribulation perhaps, for the other's woe, folds her hands in his.

Montrose starts forward. He tries to speak, but his lips are dry—a mist gathers before his eyes. "Laura! Laura! Laura!"

This is his cry, but she will not hear him. "Faithful unto death, my darling!" whispers Jack, as he draws her in, closes the window, and goes from it. Miss Rochester comes into the hall, shuts the door in Petrarch's face, leaving him without in what seemed to him like the cold black night.

"She has destroyed every hope I had in the world," he cries, in his despair. "And yet, I cannot hate her as I ought."

But Jack is happy.

Jack is happy. Laura also. For some years have gone on since that miserable time, and Laura makes a good wife. If she has not found the love for which she declared so gaily, in the old days of song and romance, at least she has found a brave and chivalrous soul to serve her; and she is wise enough to value it at its real worth.

And it is well for John Chester that, being so happy, he makes the most of his time, for that time is fated to be but short. There comes a day, when baby Jack is three years old, that fever smites the strong father down, and eats its way into the central forces of life. Laura with a pale face sits by her husband's side and holds his hands as he stands trembling by that open door, that will soon shut upon him: when he will have passed out of her sight for ever.

Jack looks at her wistfully with his dim, dying eyes. "You have been a good wife!" he sighs. "A good wife to me, Laura—my Laura!"

Yes, she had been a good and affectionate wife to him. But they must say to each other the last farewell now. Death enters.

So Laura is alone again. She goes about the house pale and still, in her long black dress heavily weighted with crape. People say what a pretty young widow Mrs. Chester is, and so rich! But she misses Jack. He was not Petrarch; but he was pre-eminently good, and kind, and tender.

The time slips by: weeks—months—more than a year. Laura is listless; rather discontented: but for Jack the younger, she would have no object left in life.

One day, when she felt unusually restless, she walked over to her old home, to see her sister. Miss Rochester was out; was gone, the servants thought, to call on Mrs. Chester. Laura went into the library to wait.

Suddenly, some time afterwards, she comes flying out of the room like mad, and dashes through the hall into the open air. Anna, chancing to be approaching with little Jack, gazes with amazement at the excited woman flying down the path in her black dress.

"Laura!" she cries, "what is the matter. What has happened?" Little Jack, too, puts up his tiny hands, half-frightened, and shouts "Mamma!" But Laura does not heed him. Her face is flushed—she is holding some crumpled papers to her panting breast.

"What has happened?" she repeats after Anna. "It happened long ago. Oh, Anna! Anna! How could you play me so falsely—how could you deceive me so?"

Anna has only to look at the papers in Laura's shaking hands to know the truth. She flushes guiltily red.

"Where did you get them?" she stammers.

"In your writing-desk. The key was in it, and I fell to looking over old letters to pass away the time. I meant no wrong; our desks used to be open to one another. I found these. Oh, Anna! What had I done to deserve this from you?"

Anna's guilty face sinks lower and lower. She turns away uneasily from the reproach of those blue, sorrowful eyes.

"I did it for the best!" she pleads humbly. "Forgive, forgive me! I did it for your sake, Laura; for your best interests."

"The best!" Laura's voice rings high with angry scorn. "Was it best to bring reproach upon the man I loved dearest of all in the world? Was it best to shadow his life as well as mine?"

Anna is silent. What can she say?

"Tell me," cries Laura, below her breath. "Tell me—did *he*—did Jack know? Had *he* any hand in this?"

"No!" Anna, true to the last, stands between Jack and reproach. "He knew nothing; at the most he dimly guessed the truth. Blame me as much as you will, but let Jack's name rest in peace. He was true to you—it was partly because be loved you so that I did it: and because you had been left to my care by your mother. Who was that other miserable man, that he should come here and mar your life? Jack *did* love you, Laura—he was a good husband—kind, tender! What fault have you to find?"

"None, none with him! all you say of him is true. But, oh, Anna! you forget how you wronged that other one; how you made me stab his true heart with cruel, upbraiding words! And he was innocent of it all! Oh, it is wicked—wicked!"

Breaking away from little Jack's hands, she bursts away. She does not stop till she comes to the ravine, on the bridge where she met *him* first; where he gave her the picture—where they had been so happy together those fair autumn days. For by those letters she had found Petrarch was true—letters written by himself to Miss Rochester at the time to tell her so. Nay, written to Laura; but Anna had suppressed them. Why did she keep them by her to tell tales?

"Oh, cruel, cruel!" cries Laura, leaning her head on the rail. "Cruel to deceive me so. And he loved me all the while. He never loved any but me! And I—oh, how I spoke to him! how I stabbed his dear heart with my unjust words. What does he think of me? Claude! Claude! what do you think of me, to-day—me, your Laura—*your* Laura! not Petrarch's, not Jack's: but yours—*yours!*"

Her wild cry pierces the air. Who is this that rises, as one would rise from the dead, in answer to love's compelling cry, and comes forward out of the shadow of the rocks in response to her wild words? A slender figure; a man with stooping shoulders, and with dreamy eyes looking out from under tangled locks of dark falling hair.

Laura looks at him bewildered. "Claude! Claude!" she whispers. "Is this you? And here, now! Here!"

He smiles a little sadly. "Is it presumption in me to come?" he answers, gently. "I only came to see the old scenes, Mrs. Chester, not you. Do not be angry, I shall not stay long to trouble anyone. It is the first time, too, since that night, seven years ago, when you drove me away from you."

Seven years! Ah, how changed he is. The hair is streaked with grey now that used to be so bright, so bright. The form is bent that used to be so gracefully upright; there are lines of care and suffering on his face.

He comes forward and leans upon the rail beside her, looking over. Drawing closer, she sees how pale he is—how thin, how worn. "Seven years, seven years!" he repeats sadly. "Seven years since that night. Ah, Laura! you hurt me with your cruel words then."

"Stop!" cries Laura, suddenly lifting her pale face. She has been fighting for strength to tell him the truth, for wisdom to put her knowledge of the wicked wrong done them years ago into fitting words, such as may make all things plain to him, and yet cast no shadow on the dead—no more shadow than she can help on the living.

"That past time—I mean its ending—was all a mistake," she says; "my mistake. I have found these this very day."

Montrose looks at her, simple inquiry in his eyes. Laura unfolds the packet of letters with shaking hands; they rustle like dying leaves. Amidst them were one or two from the false woman who had first written to Anna Rochester. For in truth Anna had once thought what she said was true. A last letter from the woman was there also: a repentant letter, written from her death-bed.

Claude glances at the writing with his sad faded eyes. "I knew it; I knew there must be some plot against me, even there," he says sadly. "Rosacea was my Italian cousin: her mother and mine were sisters. Rosa cared for me too much. It was very foolish of her, for I only thought of her as a sister. I knew she used to track my wanderings and movements, and I suppose she heard of my stay here—and of you. I cannot say more. One must not speak harshly of the dead."

"And she is dead?"

"She died a year ago. Her last days were not happy ones. They were darkened with the knowledge that she had marred her own peace throughout life—and ruined my happiness."

"Why did you not tell me this at the time?" asks Laura in a despairing tone. "All then might have been so different."

"How could I tell you what I did not know? Could I divine that Rosa was writing to your house, and writing falsehoods? Besides, you would not listen to any explanation. And—I saw you in Mr. Chester's arms, and your sister shut her doors upon me."

Laura turns away her head. The leaves drift down, down, down. They will soon make quite a little mound at her feet like a grave. What is buried in it? Hope—love—youth—the best part of her life. Glancing up, she meets his eyes. Turning away, they walk together towards the old house—Anna's. It is very near. Claude Montrose is talking in the once persuasive tones.

"Must it be for ever, then?" he asks as they come to the gate, and her hand meets his in parting.

Laura does not answer. For ever is a long time. But poor Jack's grave lies between them.

"I will come again in—perhaps—another year or so," whispers Claude, his tones full of a yearning pain. "You will not deny me that much."

"Yes, come," she says. "Come as a friend."

And with this vague understanding, this glimpse of future light to dawn and shine, they part.

Claude Montrose comes. And—he never goes away again: he takes his place in Laura's home. But—does Laura find in Petrarch's love the rest she craves? Who shall say?

Poor dead Jack! Anna at least is faithful to his memory. She takes the boy Jack on her knee, and tells him what a great warm heart his father had, how brave he was, and simple, and generous. Laura perhaps may be in the library with Petrarch at the time, listening to his verses, and trying to find the old sweetness in them.

And Love? Ah, Love! Sometimes I think that the love poets tell about died with Petrarch in Italy all those ages ago.

ELAM'S ADVENTURE.

"CAN'T you tell us some of your adventures?" I asked of my friend Elam, who had returned from his many years' travels in the bush and other outlandish places, and was sitting with me and my wife. And, though absent so long, he was, so to say, a young man yet.

"Adventures? Well, I have had plenty. Rough ones, some of them."

"Please tell us one," chimed in Mary.

Elam laughed. "I can tell you of a curious one that I met with in the mountains."

"Oh, yes; do. Which mountains?"

"In California: up in one of its wild districts."

"That will be the very thing."

"Well," said Elam, running his tapering fingers through his hair, and smiling at my wife, "I'll soften down things in the telling as well as my blunt speech and uncivilised modes of thought will allow of, and you must excuse the rest."

"Oh, I'll excuse anything. Please begin."

"When I started from home to settle in unfrequented districts," began Elam, "I set up a theory that no young man should ask a woman to marry him until he had prepared a home for her. It is surprising how much you begin to think of a wife over yonder, arising I suppose from the extreme loneliness of one's existence. I was no exception. The land I took up was in the Rogue-River Valley; and, after I had got it a bit ship-shape, I worked away with that object in view—to bring home a wife."

"But, Elam, had you selected a wife?" I asked.

"No. I intended to do that as soon as I could, though you may say I was full young to be thinking of it. I worked on, and was pretty successful. I built me a house, got a considerable quantity of stacks, made a flower-garden for my wife; even put up the pegs and nails she would want to hang her dresses on. I intended that same autumn to get me on my horse, ride through the Wallamet Valley, and find me my wife, marry her, and bring her home."

At the notion of courting in that off-hand style, we laughed a little. Elam laughed too, as if the recollection pleased him.

"You think it strange, I see. It was not so very strange over there in those days, where girls were as scarce as angels. There was not a girl within forty miles of me: and I assure you that the very thought of one, as I drove in those nails for her garments to hang on, went through me like a thrill. You don't believe? Go out, yourself, and try it."

"But I do believe."

"I had about two hundred and fifty head of cattle, a good house with a garden, a young orchard, vegetables growing, sweet-scented flowers—all in readiness for the wife I hoped to bring home to bless me and to take care of this, my possession. And what do you think happened to it?"

We could not tell.

"There came such a plague of grasshoppers upon the valley that everything perished. Crops, orchard, flowers, grass, every green, and delightful, and promising thing; the grasshoppers destroyed all. You remember the Second Chapter of Joel?"

I nodded.

"'The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.' I was ruined. My stock died; at least, the greater portion; they had nothing to feed upon. Yes, it was complete and absolute ruin."

Elam paused a moment; mentally looking at the past.

"I considered myself disappointed in love too," he resumed in the quaintest of tones. "Though I had not yet been out to find my girl, I knew she was somewhere in that other valley waiting for me: and when the greedy grasshoppers ate up everything, I felt that I had been jilted. It actually gives me a pang now to think of those useless pegs on which my imagination had so often seen a girl's pink cotton dress and a white sun-bonnet."

Elam gave a great sigh. He was an eccentric fellow.

"I became misanthropic; said to myself that between fate and the grasshoppers I had been used hardly. Packing up my books and a few other traps, I bade adieu to the Rogue-River Valley for ever, and started for the mountains. It was a longish journey, as I had to drive before me the stock I had left. There, in the mountains, I settled down again, built myself a fort, and played hermit. No jilting girls should come near me now."

"A fort?"

"A regular fort. A stockade eighteen feet high, with an embankment four feet high around it, and a strong gate in the middle. My tent was in the midst of the enclosure, with my books and household gods, fire-arms, and all the rest of my property stowed away in it."

"Were you afraid of the Indians?"

"Indians and white men. Yes, I saw a good many Indians at first within the range of my rifle. They learned to keep away from my fort, finding it did not pay to attempt to invade it. Down in the valley below there were mining camps: and you perhaps know what some of the hangers-on of such camps are. I sold beef—that is, heads of cattle—to the miners; and as I had sometimes a tidy sum of money by me, it was necessary to be careful."

"What a strange life for a young man. For you, Elam!"

"I herded my cattle, drove them to market, cooked, studied, wrote; and indulged in misanthropy, combined with some rifle practice. By the time I had entered on the second summer in the mountains, I felt quite at home, and was getting rich. After all, the life had its charms. A man cannot quite tire of it when he is but a few years out of his teens."

"And the girl-wife?"

"I am coming to that. Having had time to forget my ill-usage, a reaction set in, you see, and I thought, after all, I must ride to the Wallamet to see after my girl. But I was not in the hurry over it that I had been before. This is all very dull, you will say, but there'll be some stir presently."

"It is not at all dull."

"One Sunday afternoon—how did I know it was Sunday, you ask? Because I had kept a count of the days all along; kept my diary regularly. One Sunday afternoon, I was sitting outside writing, when a shadow fell across the paper; and, looking up, there stood a skeleton. Accustomed as I was to lonely encounters with strange men of all kinds, my hair stood on end as I stared at the spectre before me. He was the merest boy in years, pretty and delicate by nature, and evidently reduced to this shadowy state by starvation. His story was soon told. He had left Boston on board a vessel bound for the north-west coast, had been wrecked at the mouth of the Umpaqua and been wandering about in the mountains ever since, subsisting on roots and berries."

"He was ——"

"No, I assure you," interrupted Elam, with an amused look at my wife, "the boy was not a young woman in disguise, if that's what you are thinking. He was just a poor, weak, half-starved lad, named Edwards. I fed and nursed him until he was able to work for himself, and then I got Sam Chong Sung to let him take up a claim alongside a Chinese camp, promising to favour the Chinaman in a beef contract if he would be good to the boy. I still continued to see a great deal of him."

"And did Edwards succeed?"

"Yes, he got on. One day two Chinamen stole some of Sam Chong Sung's horses; and he offered four hundred dollars to Edwards if he would go after the thieves and track them. Edwards asked my advice, and I encouraged him to go, telling him where I fancied he would find the men. So he started in pursuit; and I confess I missed him."

Again Elam paused. We did not interrupt him.

"A man came to my fort one day who was naked and starving. He was a bad-looking fellow; very: but you will say a man naturally does look bad when his clothes are nowhere and his bones protrude through their skin. I clothed him, fed him, cared for him kindly until he was able to travel, and then he went away. The next

Sunday I was sitting outside my fort, as customary on that leisure day, reading some translations from the Greek poets—for I daresay you remember I could never make much of Greek itself—when, chancing to look off my book, I beheld a vision."

"A what?"

"A vision. A vision of a lovely woman. And I can tell you I should as soon have expected to see a vision there as a woman. I had seen neither for a year or two. She was riding up the approach to my fort on a fine horse: riding gracefully and very slowly, as if to give me time to get over my surprise; and I believe I needed it. The picture she made is in my mind now: I see the very flicker of the shadow and the sunlight across the road and the glitter of some steel that fastened her horse's trappings, as he arched his neck in impatience of her restraining hand.——Are you tired, old friend?"

"Never less so in my life."

"You see I had been alone so long; and I think I must be susceptible. That vision, breaking in suddenly, as it did, upon my solitude, gave me the queerest sensations. I was just spell-bound. Not so she. Reining in her horse at my gate, she squared round on her saddle and looked at me, silently asking my assistance to dismount. I helped her down—what else could I do?—and then, at her request, gently preferred, went to put up and feed her horse. Had she dropped from the clouds? I did not know."

"Well?"

"If you'll believe me, when I returned indoors, my guest had got her habit off. Evidently she meant to make herself at home. A tall, young, beautiful, well-dressed woman! Just a goddess she looked to me. Her eyes were large, black, and melting, her hair was grand, her manner easy. She was hungry, she said: would I give her something to eat? And while I was making preparations to give her of my best, she read aloud one of the Greek translations, an ode to Diana, commenting upon it herself. That she was a woman of culture and education, whatever might have brought her into her present strange position, was obvious. Well, now," continued Elam, "you can guess whether a young man, isolated on the mountains, ruined by the grasshoppers, and jilted by the girl of the Wallamet Valley, was bewildered or not. Entertaining goddesses was not in my line."

"How long did she stay?"

"Wait a bit. What with reading and eating, our acquaintance improved fast. She offered to sing a song, and gave me 'Kate Kearney.' I might have lost my head to her, perhaps, to say nothing of my heart, but for a certain inward latent doubt. I did not care that my girl should ride about, elegantly attired, on prancing horses, and drop down unexpectedly upon hermits. Still it was a pleasant feeling to find oneself near her, and certainly a novel one. I asked her her history, and she told it me. She was of a good New

England family, reared in affluence, well educated and accomplished; but by a freak of fortune she became reduced to poverty and to be an exile from home ——"

"What was the freak of fortune, Elam?"

"Ah, what indeed? The old story, I suppose; but I did not ask her. She had made her way to California, resolved to get on and get money—and she had got it. She went about from camp to camp, of the miners and others, with stationery and various articles needed by them; sold them these things, wrote letters for them, sang to them, nursed them when sick, and carried their letters express to San Francisco to be posted. For all these services she received large payments—money is not much valued, you know, over there—and she had also had a good deal of rough gold given to her as specimens. Did she like that kind of life, I asked her, so contrary to her early habits, and she answered me quickly: 'It is not what we *choose* that we do in this world, but what Fate chooses for us. I have made a competency, and gained a rich and varied experience. Life may not be what I once pictured it would be, but I am content.' She sighed as she said it: and I didn't believe in the 'content.'"

"But what had brought her to you that day?"

"She had not told me herself then. Presently I asked her: asked her why she came to see me. I never shall forget the smile with which she turned to answer. It pretty nigh disarmed me. We were sitting somewhat close too; her flowing silk gown touched my knees. Altogether, I began to think of those useless pegs in my house down in Rogue-River Valley. But what she said pulled up my wandering thoughts and turned them to present things. 'Shall you be surprised to hear that I have come to do you a real service?' she said. And she went on to relate that, having to pass the previous night at a place not many miles away, in a house where partitions were thin, she had chanced to overhear a plan for my murder and robbery: the villain in chief of the plot being the starved and naked wretch whom I had sheltered and sent away rejoicing not many days previous. All in a moment, while I was pondering on the doubtful problem of gratitude, a fancy came over me that she might not be telling truth; that it might be just an excuse got up to justify her own entrance; and I playfully hinted so. 'A woman does not trifle with subjects like these; nor deceive when she goes out of her way to do a service,' she answered. 'I rode off from that house the other way this morning, made a détour, and came here to warn you.—And, now that I have done it, if you will please to get my horse, I will ride away again.' All fair, that. I, full of thanks and repentance, asked her to stay longer if she was not perfectly rested; but she declined, and I brought the steed round and helped her to mount him. Once in the saddle her humour changed: she smiled and reminded me that I had not been polite enough to invite her to return. A week of reading, talking, riding, trout-fishing, and romancing, up in those

splendid mountains would be very charming: perhaps she *might* come if I asked her."

"And did you ask her?"

"I did not. A young man, with a reputation to sustain up there in the mountains, couldn't invite a young lady to stay a week with him, could he now?" cried Elam quaintly: which set us both laughing.

"So I parried the question as easily as I could, and she rode away. In going slowly down the trail, she turned and kissed her hand to me with a gracious sweetness. I assure you the struggle within my own mind was great at that moment: and I don't know whether I have forgiven myself yet for what happened afterwards."

"What did happen?"

"She came back again. *She came back again, and I drove her away.* That is, I made the best excuses I could for not re-admitting her, saying we should perhaps have fighting and murder—and what not—in my fort that night and it would be no place or scene for a delicately-bred woman. The pretty and modest girl, who was to come from Wallamet Valley and hang up her pink garments on my pegs, had rushed into my mind, you see—but I never like to confess to this part of the story, because I get laughed at. But don't you think I did right?—having my reputation to keep up?"

While we had our laugh out, Elam was pushing his soft, fine light hair off his brow with those slender fingers, that looked as if no rough work had ever come near them—and what must they have been before it did come? He went on thoughtfully.

"She finally rode away, not having been invited to get off her horse, leaving me in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. From telling myself I was a bear, I turned to the other subject — my promised robbery and murder. Had she simply invented that little fable?—or was it a true bill? I felt inclined to believe it the latter. Any way, I deemed it well to be prepared for all contingencies, barring and bolting my fort against intruders, and sitting up late over the fire. This was Sunday night. On the Tuesday morning three or four mounted men rode up, one of whom was the traitor, my former naked and hungry protégé. He no longer attempted to conceal his true character from me, but said he and his comrades were intending to 'clean out' the Chinese camp, and he *asked me to join them in the raid.* I was on my guard in answering him; simply saying that I would have nothing to do with robbing the Chinese, that they were my friends and customers, and I thought they had best be let alone. With that, he went off. That same afternoon Edwards came in, having recaptured some of the horses. He was very tired, and asked leave to stay with the horses at my place till next day. I said nothing to Edwards of the gang just gone away, or that (what I suspected) they had talked of making a raid on the Chinese only to throw me off my guard, that it was my fort on which the attack was

to be: and I hoped the fellows did not know of the arrival of the horses, as they would be an additional temptation for them."

"I'd not live in those wild, lawless regions for the whole world," cried out Mary.

"Dusk came on. I sent Edwards, dead tired, to bed: made a great fire in the tent, and sat by it facing the window. My expected visitor came, the villain. He made believe to have been drinking, and put that forward as a plea for asking shelter until the morning. The instant he was inside, I made the gate fast, driving the big wooden pins home with an axe. I caught a gleam from his eyes as I was doing this, which——"

"But why not have made the gate fast before he entered?"

"Because he was safer inside than out. A conviction had come over me that this man was some most desperate character. His comrades were no doubt waiting near, and his plan had been quietly to open the gate to them."

"Had you no arms but your rifle?"

"I wanted none, for we understood each other—my rifle and I. This villain understood us too. I don't think, either, he liked to see Edwards sleeping in the tent. The lad was not good for much: but still he was somebody. It would now be a contest of skill between the fellow and me. He was waiting his opportunity, and so was I. Of all villainous-looking men, he was the worst. Tall, swarthy, black-bearded; with a hard face that must have been handsome once, and fierce black eyes gleaming with evil. He sat on one side the hearth, I on the other, our eyes fixed on one another."

Elam paused. I wondered what was coming.

"You guess, I daresay, that I have a quick ear, for you know what my temperament is—all sensitive consciousness. My good hearing had been cultivated, too, by listening for the Indians. By-and-by, I detected a very stealthy movement outside the fort, and then a faint chirrup, such as a young squirrel might make. Up sprang the man, but I covered him with my rifle, cocked. He saw the movement, showed his teeth, and drew out a pistol: but not before I ordered him to throw down his arms, or DIE. He hesitated: he saw that in my eye and aspect that made him quail. With the rifle levelled and my finger on the trigger, he threw down his arms—pistol and knife—with a dreadful oath. I had the best of him, and he knew it; for before he could have put his pistol into form, or rushed on me with his knife, the ball from my rifle would have been in him. His language was awful—and we are not nice in that respect, you know, in California—the foam lay on his lips. He demanded to be let out of the house, denouncing me as a robber and a murderer. To all his ravings I had but one answer: to be quiet, to obey me, and he should live; dare to disobey me, and he should die. He sat there, cowed, on the opposite side of the fire, nor daring to make even a doubtful motion. Then I told him what I knew—that I had heard

what he was, and what he had meant to do. With that he broke down utterly—or pretended at it, howled like a child, declaring that now he knew my pluck, and I had been the first man ever to get the better of him, he loved me like a brother. All the same, love or no love, he had to sit where he was, and I in front of him, with my rifle on my knees. There was a long night before us; he could have no liberty in it, and the restraint was horrible to him. One moment he laughed uneasily; the next, cursed; the next, cried. It was a strange experience, was it not? To pass away the time, I asked him to relate the history of his life. He said he would; but would first of all just shake hands, for the respect he bore me. Touching my rifle significantly, I pointed to the stick lying across the hearth-place between us. 'That's your boundary line, my man,' said I; 'don't go stretching your hand over that.' And it sent him into a fit of sullenness."

"What came of it?"

"We must have remained in this position till midnight. Several times I heard slight sounds outside the fort, to which he listened; but he dared not respond to them, he could do nothing. After a while they ceased: his associates, rightly judging that something or other had gone wrong and spoilt the scheme, no doubt made off, tired of waiting. The fellow's head was bent, his chin rested on his breast, his shaggy beard spreading over it like a mantle. He suffered martyrdom. He was like a hyæna caged: though he showed it only by involuntary nervous startings and furtive glances. Finally he could bear it no longer; and entreated me piteously, abjectly, to give him his freedom or blow out his brains. He could not have his freedom just yet, I quietly told him; but he knew how to get his brains blown out if he desired it. Which brought forth some more of his choice language. And the lad, Edwards, slept through it all!"

"What a situation! What a night!"

"Ay, it was. By-and-by, we got to talking; I not relaxing in my vigilance for an instant. Once started on his own history, the subject seemed to have a fascination for him. He had been honestly 'raised,' he said, by good and loving parents, in the state of Missouri, had passionately loved a young girl in the town where he lived—and his description of her was so pretty and vivid that I declare it brought into my mind that other girl waiting for me down in the Wallamet Valley. To enable him to marry her he resolved to go to California and make in some honest way the requisite money. He went, and did make it, and, full of joyful anticipations, returned to find that she had married another. The man—the husband—had played them false, told the girl that her lover was dead, and married her himself. When he came out of the brain fever which this news gave him, he was invited to an evening party in the town, one given in honour of him. To this party came his love and her husband: when he put out his hand to welcome her, their eyes met, and each knew then,

and for the first time, how they had been betrayed. From that hour the man took to evil courses, and his first victim was the false husband. His hand was against every man's, and every man's against him; and he became a desperate outlaw. Once again he saw his love, meeting her in the streets of Sacramento: she was married again, and she turned from him with a cry of aversion. Yes, he might be desperate now, he added, but he had had his trials. I asked him what his true name was. Hiram Creddin, he answered; but the one he was known by was Boone Helm. That made me start."

"Why did it?"

"Because I had heard of Boone Helm before—and knew he was the greatest terror of the time. I suppose I should have done society a benefit had I shot him as he sat there; but I did not. Perhaps you won't believe that I felt a sort of pity for the fellow—but I did. Well, morning came at last. I sent Edwards to get the gate open, and escorted my visitor out, telling him that there was not room for him and for me in that part of the country, and that he had better quit it for another."

"And did he?"

"I suppose so. He never attempted to molest me again. Not long after, I heard of his death. He met his fate up east of the mountains."

"And what of that pretty Amazon, Elam? I'm sure she was almost as good to you as a guardian angel! Coming on horseback to give you warning!"

"Was she not? And I had returned it by behaving so unhandsomely to her! But now, I just ask you—Would it have been proper to have let her come in on that week's visit?—and I a young man with a reputation!"

Again we burst out laughing. Elam's appeal to us was put with the most unsophisticated air possible.

"At any rate, you did not."

"No," said he, "I did not. And, taking all things into consideration, I think I did right."

"Have you ever seen her since?"

"Once. It was at San Francisco. She was married, and staying at the same hotel that I was. Her husband was a fine, tall, dashing man, what with you would be called a gentleman, and very wealthy. She had been lucky, you see. I knew her as soon as she came into the drawing-room, and in a few minutes I saw that she recognised me; but she did not take any notice, neither did I. She told me with her eyes that she remembered; but there was an appealing glance in them, which I interpreted rightly. After dinner she went to the piano, and sang 'Kate Kearney.' We had got into conversation before that, the three of us, just as strangers will do in an hotel, and I found the husband a very intelligent, educated, well-informed

man. In parting I got just a word aside with her. 'I am glad to meet you again, and thus.' 'Hush!' she answered. 'I thank you for your reticence. In the past of a life that has been composed of ups and downs, there is generally something or other lying on the memory that we don't care to recall or proclaim to the world.'"

"And about that young girl in the Wallamet Valley?"

"I never found her," replied Elam, shaking his head thoughtfully. "Truth to say, I never started fairly to look for her. Life is composed of ups and downs, you know, as that other lady observed, of blighted hopes, and all that. Perhaps it's as well."

LOVE SONG IN MAY.

My best beloved—the Spring is fair,
  The woods are green, and life is good,
Will you not come with me, and tread
  The tangle-covered paths and wood?
The wind-flower blanches all the copse,
  With hyacinth the hedge is blue,
And every wakened leaf seems fair—
  But not so fair as you!

While blackbirds sing on hazel twigs,
  Through the dim arches of the trees,
The cuckoo's distant cry is borne
  Across the meadow by the breeze.
The thrush's song is sweetest far,
  But saddens as the hours go by;
You hear?—the nightingale's in love—
  But not so much as I.

Will you not listen to the Spring?
  What tender voices do you hear?
Have violets no speech for you?
  Is not the nightingale's song dear?
Yet, somehow, though you catch the sound,
  You miss the meaning of the strain;
Ah! why not have more joy from love,
  With not so much of pain.

E. Nesbit.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1877.

GABRIEL'S APPOINTMENT.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW LUCY TOOK A WARNING, AND ALICE A LIKENESS.

"IS that you, my dear? I began to think you had quite given me up."

The speaker was old Mr. Martin; and the speech was addressed to Lucy Pyne, as she entered his room in the model lodging-house one day, carrying a small dish neatly tied up in a napkin.

"Why, Mr. Martin, you knew I was out cooking, and Grace too. Here now, our young lady has sent you a nice wing of roast chicken and bread sauce, to tempt your appetite. I'll answer for it you have not had much to-day."

The old man's eyes brightened a little, as she placed the dish before him.

"Aye," he said, "that old woman has not been near me yet: and when she does come, she talks so much, I wish she had stayed away. My dear, where is your sister?"

"Grace is helping at Mr. Forrest's. They have a deal to do at the Mission-house now, with the invalid dinners, and the soup kitchen, and the school. There are seven or eight boys in the dormitories, who have their meals regular, along with Mr. Forrest—and there's the gentleman upstairs, besides Miss Thirza. Grace has plenty to do."

"Do you see much of her?"

"I see her every day."

"Is she happy?"

"Dear heart alive, Mr. Martin, what an odd question to ask! I don't know that she is, particularly—but we are much too busy to talk about whether we are, or are not."

"*You* look brisk enough," said the old man, eyeing her keenly.

In truth, there was a bright freshness about the trim figure and open face, that no one could look at without pleasure; it might even have been suggested that the freshness was rather brighter than usual, as if maintained by some hidden joy of heart. A touch of shyness and sauciness combined made her turn away from his steady gaze, rosy red, but smiling, while busying herself in preparing his table for the dinner, which she had put down to warm in the fender. He muttered something she could not understand, and then asked abruptly, "When is that young man coming to see me, who goes by my name?"

"Do you want to see him?"

"Yes, I do. Mr. Forrest promised to bring him: but, out of sight, out of mind. What is he like?"

"He is a dark, grave, silent sort of a person," said Lucy, musingly. "Speaks rather short and sharp, but not unkind—has eyes that seem to see everything and to take everybody's measure. Mr. Forrest gets on with him better than most people; he makes him tell tales to the lads in the night school, and they like that a deal better than sums and spelling. They'll miss him badly, for he is going down into the country again, about a house for his master."

"Ask him to come and see me first, will you?"

"Yes, I'll ask him, but he's not one to do a thing because he is asked. Suppose he asks me why you want to see him—what shall I say?"

"Say that he will hear *that* from me, when he comes. And now, will you tell me who it is that has been talking of me and my affairs, and so bringing a lawyer down upon me, trying to find out where I had lived, and what I do with my money? Have you chattered to anybody, by chance?"

Lucy hesitated. "I may have mentioned you as a friend, Mr. Martin—just to a civil friend of my own. But he would never dream of sending you a lawyer; he hates the very sight of them."

"And who is this civil friend of yours, my dear?"

"Oh, it is just Mr. Bruce's other servant, Joel Treherne. Now, Mr. Martin, do eat your dinner, that I may tell our young lady you liked it."

"Is Joel Treherne a young man?"

"Yes—oh yes. I don't know his age exactly."

"Married?"

"Oh no."

"You know *that*, at any rate?"

"Of course I do."

"And you see him pretty often?"

"Almost every day. Mr. Bruce sends him over, in case Miss Leicester should want him; and he is obliged to be along with Mrs. Ellis and me, and he helps us wonderfully."

"And you like him, my girl?"

"He is very—very—pleasant, and good, and—and—I am sure *you* would like him, Mr. Martin!"

"Oh," said Mr. Martin, "perhaps he will come and see me too."

"If I ask him he will. He's not like the other."

"What does Grace say to him?"

"Grace says very little," said Lucy, with a half sigh. "She is full of her own thoughts and troubles, you see: and we haven't time for much talking."

"Lucy, my child, I hope that *you* are all right, but I hear strange stories about Grace—yes, I do, and they frighten me. You poor dear children don't know half that we old sinners know about the wickedness in London—and to know that either of you had fallen into bad hands would just finish me. Don't be angry with me—and never mind how I hear these things—keep your eyes open, that's all, and notice who Grace walks with, and who comes after her. I'm told she is seen with some man late in the evenings: a thing that never happened before. You have no mother living, and you must do what you can instead."

"But I don't believe a word of it. If Grace talks to anybody it is all right, I am sure—and I know who it must be. I shall tell her what you say, Mr. Martin, and I think she will be very angry."

"That won't matter. You do what I say: if Grace can show you it is all right, I'll ask her pardon. If she can't, just tell Miss Leicester, and get her to take Grace in hand."

"What would Grace say if she heard you? But there, I'll see about it," said Lucy, more to pacify him than because she was convinced he could be right. And she coaxed him to eat his dinner, and waited upon him so deftly that he presently remarked, with his dry smile, "How I shall miss you when you go!"

"Oh, but it can't be yet—not for ever so long," said she, innocently, then grew scarlet at having committed herself. He enjoyed her confusion for a few moments, before continuing, "Miss Leicester will be marrying soon, I hear, and she'll never leave you behind her."

"She has almost promised that I shall go as housemaid, and Grace as cook, if Grace will—that is the point. Grace won't say yes or no."

"Ah!" said the old man, and he finished his meal in silence. Lucy cleared everything away; washed up the plates, and put coals on the fire, and then told him she must go. He held her hand for a minute, while seeming to reflect.

"You think I shall like him, do you?"

"Now, Mr. Martin! Yes, I know you will—he shall come and see you. Good bye—I shall be late."

And she hurried away, with her cheeks in a glow, even beyond that conferred by the fire; half pleased, half vexed, at the inference her old friend had so quickly drawn. As she went home, however, her

thoughts involuntarily returned to what he had said of Grace; and, warmly as she had repelled the idea of anything being amiss, the old man's uneasiness was not without its effect.

"She *is* different, somehow, and I can't make it out; I thought that hearing of Darch Williams would have made her more happy. I don't like her Mr. Jones; and it was a queer thing about that cough Miss Kerr heard; for, though I wouldn't say so for the world, I never knew anyone with a cough like his, and I could declare he was at chapel that night—though he has not been since. I'll find out something—if there's anything to find out."

She found Mrs. Honest in a breathless state of industry, with Sally following her about, keenly watching for opportunities; and Lucy's entrance was the signal for an outpouring of complaints. There were so many quarts of soup, and so many pounds of pudding to be given out that day, and she had told Grace all about it, and left it to her: and now nothing was ready, and Grace was gone out, nobody knew where. It was not like her to behave like that; and it vexed Mrs. Honest all the more that she had been boasting of the sisters to Miss Thirza, who was disposed to find fault with the arrangements of the household.

"I told her you and your sister were worth your weight in gold, Lucy; so trustworthy and straightforward: and I shan't know what to think soon. Grace is not quite the same—I can't make her out. She works hard enough when she does work: but she ought to know better than to leave meat and vegetables in this way, as if they were to get ready of themselves. Can't you stop and help a bit? Do, there's a good girl."

Lucy could not refuse; she threw off her shawl and bonnet, tied on an apron, and set to work. Her mind was full of her sister, and all the while she was making the pudding she was wondering what had come to her, and what was the cause of this sudden absence. Presently, some sticky fingers touched her on the elbow, and she found Sally looking up in her face, an eager look in her eyes.

"What is it, Sally? There, don't touch my basin; your fingers won't improve the taste of the pudding."

"I know where Grace is gone," said Sally, eyeing the pudding with a longing gaze.

"Do you? Where is she gone, then?"

"To Mother Hughes' 'am and beef shop."

"How do you know?"

"Because their Liza came to fetch her."

"Oh, then she will soon be back," said Lucy, careful to show no uneasiness before this precocious observer.

"So she said when she ran off; but she's been gone this two hours and more," was Sally's remark, availing herself of a happy moment for abstracting a raisin unobserved, and vanishing immediately. Duties prevented Lucy from following her for cross-exami-

nation; and while she was debating whether to tell Mrs. Honest or not, Joel came into the kitchen, and uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure at finding her so employed. She explained that Grace had gone out, and Mrs. Honest had asked her to stay; and, with scant reticence, owned it was as much as she could do, for she was worried about her sister, and longed to go after her.

"Will you trust me to go instead of you?" asked Joel. "I look upon Grace as something very precious, you know, and if you thought she wouldn't mind ——"

"But I know she would mind, very much. You mustn't think of it. She will soon be in, I daresay. And I want to say something else. I wish you would make your friend Mr. Martin call on the old gentleman I've told you of. He wants to see him because they have the same name. He was asking about him to-day."

"I'll see if I can: but he doesn't like calling on people. He is going away, you know, the day after to-morrow—much against his will."

"What makes him go if he doesn't wish it?"

"You see we want to secure that house, and somebody appears to be after it, offering good terms for immediate possession. But Dr. Nelson promised us the refusal, and won't treat with anyone else till he knows our mind. So Mr. Bruce has resolved to take it at once, and the Ironhand must go and garrison it. It is dull work for him, but we can't both be spared."

"Why, what on earth can you have to do here?—it has puzzled me more than once," said Lucy, lifting a heavy dish, which was immediately taken out of her hands. "I don't say you are not very good-natured, sir, but there is nothing here to fill up your time, I am sure."

"My dear girl, you do not know the half I have to do. I wish sometimes I had a dozen men's eyes, ears, and legs. Just you think one minute. Do you believe my master hurt himself by accident, or that somebody struck him?"

"I can't say, Mr. Treherne."

"Well, then, I can. The doctor says nothing but a blow from a heavy instrument could have done it—and there was nothing in the carriage to fall on his head. It was done on purpose: and whoever did it will watch for a quiet moment to do it again."

"Do they want to kill him?" asked Lucy, breathlessly.

"I am not sure about that: but they want to rob him, and Martin, and me. We are all in the same boat, though perhaps they don't know it. Look here,"—he loosened his shirt collar, and pulled out a chain with a small case at the end of it,—"each of us carries one of these always about him, and this is what the rogues want to lay hold of. You are the first soul I ever named it to, but I tell you because I would trust you with my life, and when Martin is gone I shall look to you to help me guard the Captain. I know you can be trusted, Lucy, and so can your sister."

"Here she comes," said Lucy, rather hastily drawing her hand from his, as Grace's step was heard in the passage. Joel, however, held his ground, and was standing near enough to attract anyone's attention on entering, whose mind was not already pre-occupied. But Grace took no notice of either of them. She came in like one walking in her sleep, took off her bonnet mechanically, and walked to the fire-place, as if about to do something immediately; which, however, she did not do, but stood with her hands before her, staring into the grate. Lucy looked at Joel, and he took the hint, and went quietly out of the kitchen. Then the younger sister crept up to the elder, and put her arm round her waist.

"It's all done, Grace. I came in just in time to make the puddings, and they are boiling and baking away as if you had been at home. What have you been about with Granny Hughes? That child said Eliza had been to fetch you."

"Yes, she did. It doesn't matter; I am not going there again. Lucy, dear, I can't go on in this way much longer. I shall go out of my mind if I stop here. I must get a place somewhere out of town —a long way off—where I shall not be sent for like this. Where is Miss Leicester?"

"I think she is upstairs with the other ladies and Mr. Bruce."

"I must talk to her—she will help me to get away. I don't care how hard the place is. I'd go down and scour their new house, or anything; but I can't stay here, Lucy, I can't indeed."

"Well, dear, you shan't, then. Something shall be managed. I'll see to that," said Lucy, assuming the upper hand for the first time. "You sit down there and rest, and I'll answer the door for you. There, I hear the bell now, and I am glad I had just washed my hands, for I think it is Mrs. Carroll, and she is sure to have brought something pretty and nice in the carriage."

It was Mrs. Carroll, come on particular business; but before we accompany her upstairs, we must just explain what had been going on there for some little time past.

From the hour that Edith and Alice took up their quarters over the way, it had become the object of Gabriel's existence to see as much of them as possible, and it soon became a settled thing that he should lie on the sofa in Miss Thirza's sitting-room, and that special visitors might be admitted under the shadow of her presence. At first, these visits were very short and precarious; Miss Thirza decidedly discouraged them, thinking it much wholesomer for the patient to be kept quiet, and that her own society and conversation were quite good enough for any man. She was really fond of her brother's guest, and looked upon him pretty much in the light of a pet schoolboy at home with scarlet fever, whose convalescence must be endured with the help of coddling and indulgence; and she was prepared to sit by his sofa for hours, knitting him socks, and telling him family stories of interminable length and heart-breaking intricacy.

One day of this regimen was enough, however, for the gentleman's impatience, and the next morning he commenced a new plan of operations.

"Miss Forrest," in his most insinuating voice, "I want your help."

"My dear boy, what is it? Are you cold? Shall I fetch you another pillow?"

"Thank you, I have pillows enough, but I want a thorn taken out of the top one—a grateful thorn, but too sharp for comfort."

"Now you mean mischief, by the look of your eyes. What is it you want that you cannot ring the bell and order?"

"I want to make some return to old Davie for his goodness to me—don't interrupt till you have heard me out—I can only do it at your expense."

"Then I am sure you are welcome. What am I to do?"

"You are to give him something he will value more than money, and which will remind him of us both."

"I see; you wish us to be photographed together. That is easily managed."

"'You burn,' as the children say at hide-and-seek, but it is not exactly photography that will serve my turn. I want to give David a real portrait of you, and to employ my little friend Miss Kerr, who has the hereditary gift of catching a likeness. And now, refuse me if you can, and I shall immediately go back to bed and not get up for a fortnight."

She laughed, she protested, she scolded, she reasoned, but all the while was very much pleased by the request. And Miss Thirza could hardly sleep at night for cogitating about her dress—what gown she ought to wear, and what kind of cap.

"Don't tell me, my dear," she said to Alice Kerr, who vainly endeavoured to convince her it was of very little consequence. "I have lived longer in the world than you, and was a judge of pictures before you were born, and I know what catches the eye directly in a portrait is the general expression, and I choose to be taken at my very best. If you won't be at the trouble of painting my cap, you shall not paint *me;* that's all."

Alice made due concessions, and soon found that the cap possessed one recommendation—its general effect remained the same. Whereas Miss Thirza thought it incumbent on her to essay varieties of expression—the pensive, the animated, the alarmingly grave being all tried in turn, with appeals to Gabriel as to which he liked best, till the artist was almost in despair. Miss Thirza finally decided on a certain grim fixed look, enough to strike terror into rash beholders if she only could have kept it up; but Gabriel took such care to amuse her, as he lay on his sofa, with stories and descriptions of their wanderings and adventures, that the forbidding mask was constantly slipping off, and Alice could seize the opportunity and catch the real countenance beneath.

Mr. Forrest had supplied Edith with plenty of needlework, as he wanted cushions for the chapel; and it was delightful to Gabriel to lie and watch her bent head and delicate fingers, busy among the coloured wools, her eyes lifted up from time to time to meet his, but her voice taking little part in amusing the sitter. That was his share of the duty; and, basking in the gladness of her presence, he poured out a stream of narrative, his experiences of town and bush and gold-field, dwelling on the good qualities of his faithful followers, and unconsciously revealing his own. And the three women listened, with that fascination women always feel for enterprise beyond their own reach; and it never occurred to Edith, absorbed in her own admiration of her Othello, that the "battles, sieges, perils, he had passed," might be more dangerously attractive to Alice Kerr than to Thirza Forrest. Alice looked so happy, and Gabriel was so like a kind elder brother in his manner of petting her, that Miss Leicester only rejoiced over the accident which had thrown them together, and dwelt with satisfaction on the prospect of soon having so bright a home to share with the orphan who had come to her for shelter. The intelligence that another applicant was negotiating for Lowlevels, had, as Lucy told Grace, quickened their decision, and Martin, much against his will, was to go down and take possession, as soon as the necessary arrangements had been made; and, at intervals of his personal narrative, Mr. Bruce would diverge into plans for the future, in all of which he took care that Alice should see she was included. And as these interludes were less entertaining than his anecdotes, it would often happen that Miss Thirza's general expression would go through sundry rapid changes—from the tenaciously rigid to the peacefully relaxed, subsiding into a quiet repose, from which no one thought of rousing her. It was Alice's golden opportunity, and however leisurely she might have been working before, eyes, brain, and hand would at once redouble their exertions—a fact of which Gabriel seemed perfectly cognisant, by his good-humoured glance at her across the room, and a low humming of "Oh, hush thee, my darling, lie still while you may." He little knew how those diligent fingers were employed at such times; nor would it have been known to anyone, had not Mrs. Carroll, on the present occasion, dispensed with the formality of being shown upstairs, and opened the door so quietly that she was standing behind Alice's chair before her entrance was perceived.

As she lifted her finger, nobody moved, and Miss Thirza slumbered on, while Tiny, with her hand on Alice's shoulder, inspected the work on the easel. Alice's head bent lower and lower, till only her burning ears were visible; her hands shook as she turned over her brushes and rummaged in her portfolio, and she seemed so afraid to meet the eye of her critic that Edith took the alarm, and rose to see what disaster could have occurred to damp the high courage of the artist. Fear gave Alice courage—she looked up at Clare imploringly—

the latter gave her a reassuring smile, and turned away from the easel.

"I think it is a capital likeness," she said, "and the cap is a triumph of art. You must make haste and finish it, though, for I have brought you a new order. How is the cushion getting on, Edith? I declare, if I were you, I would make Mr. Bruce do half —he looks so utterly wretched in his idleness." And she kept them both for the next few minutes engaged in lively chat, till Alice had had time to provide against further surprises. And then Miss Thirza woke up, in a tremendous state of rigidity, to show she had never closed an eye; and, becoming aware of the visitor, would fain have abdicated her seat of honour to perform the duties of hospitality, but Tiny insisted on her remaining where she was, as time was precious. She had come to see if it were not possible for Alice to finish that afternoon, and go back with her to Greville Gardens.

There was a general murmur: they could not spare Alice—the picture would require another long sitting, if not two—there could be no such violent hurry, and so on; but Alice herself said nothing, only turned as pale as she had been red before, and waited for further particulars. These were soon given, and considerably altered the aspect of affairs.

Sir Jesse Strahan had been calling on Mrs. Carroll, to explain the state of the case. He had often wished for a likeness of his daughter, but the difficulty had always arisen, how to engage any artist who might not be offended by her caprice—it being quite uncertain from day to day what humour she might be in; and against her inclination he would not allow it to be done. It had occurred to Sir Jesse, that Miss Kerr, going down to Highlevels as guest as well as artist, would be much more likely to succeed; and he had already felt his way in corresponding both with Myra herself and her grandmother. Myra had taken up the notion with unusual eagerness, and Mrs. Salisbury had assured him the young lady should be hospitably welcomed, and everything done to forward her views. Only, if done at all, the thing must be done at once, lest the wayward child should change her mind.

"He will defray all your expenses, Alice, and give you twenty guineas for the picture; but he wants to talk it over with you, so I have invited him this evening. I told him we should not like you to travel alone, and that we should send some one down with you, which he agreed to directly. We could not expect you to fall into the hands of another Mr. Bruce."

"I am sure," Alice began, with a trembling lip, "I shall never——" but her voice failed, and she turned to her palette, and began vigorously mixing her colours.

"I am afraid," said Edith, "that there is nothing more to be said. You can hardly refuse, dear child, when thus applied to."

"I am not going to refuse; I am going to finish this directly. Miss

Forrest, please sit still. If I am not interrupted again, I shall have done in an hour."

She kept her word, pulling up poor Miss Thirza without mercy whenever she attempted to doze, and working away with a fierce energy that told considerably on her touch, and in the power of the final effects. She was glad of the occupation, and of the necessity for this desperate diligence; but for its help, she felt she should disgrace herself before them all. How happily these last three weeks had passed! The duties, the interests she had shared with Edith, instead of being irksome, had proved delightful—the novelty of doing, and she might say being, good, of being useful every hour of the day, and seeing her usefulness appreciated, had been pleasanter than anything in her past experience of life; but now she saw how it was—how everything had borrowed sunlight from Gabriel's presence, even when unseen; and that to go away and leave him behind was a harder trial of cheerfulness than to come to London on the chance of finding a friend. She bit her lips, she choked down her tears, she forced herself to do her work well, as it was for him; but her heart was full of angry tumult; self-reproach, almost self-hatred, making her feel as if she hated everybody—as if it would be a positive relief to turn round upon her generous friends, and ask what was the good of all their kindness when it did not save her from being miserable?

Shame and pride came to her assistance, and saved her from a misery which would have been harder still to bear; but the change in her countenance did not escape Edith's observation, and she privately suggested to Clare that the poor child seemed so unwilling to go, it was almost cruel to make her do it.

"Cruel, my dear?" said Mrs. Carroll, "I think it would be more cruel still to hinder her from getting on in the world. Besides, the smoke and darkness are telling on her spirits already. A little country air will be the best thing she can have."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW ALICE OVERCAME ONE DIFFICULTY, AND MARTIN ANOTHER.

THE house in Greville Gardens, with all its fashionable luxuries and its treasures of art and literature, how dull it looked after the dingy apartments at the stationer's! How cheerless seemed Alice's once pleasant room, as she dressed for dinner, and thought of Edith at her solitary tea, making up her district accounts, and finishing off some one of her numerous pieces of work, before going over to the night-school. Happy Edith!—knowing herself beloved, and with so bright a prospect before her, now that Mr. Bruce seemed in a fair way of recovery! No wonder she was never too tired to do whatever was wanted—who could be tired, who had only to show her

face in Miss Thirza's sitting-room, to meet those kind eyes of his, glowing with the passionate devotion that would compensate for years of suffering? Did she love him as he deserved? if so, how could she have let him go away for five years? To Alice Kerr it appeared simply impossible; and yet, how could she doubt Edith, who had taken her into her heart with such implicit reliance on her affection? No, Ione might be unkind to Glaucus, but there was no chance of her not caring for him; Nydia's part was to be guardian angel to them both, and to fade away when her work was done. And she murmured the touching verses of "The Wind and the Beam," and lingered pensively on the closing lines:

> "How its love shall the wind reveal?
> Unwelcome its sigh—
> Mute, mute, to its rose let it steal,
> Its proof is—to die!"

"To die!" Yes, if they should ever be in great trouble, and she came to their rescue, with a pocket-book full of bank-notes, and then went off into a rapid decline from over-work—how they would think of her, and talk of her, all the rest of their lives—hang up her drawings in the best lights, and teach their children to adore her memory! Like Carton, in the "Tale of Two Cities," she seemed to see the future roll out before her, and could not help admiring herself for the noble things she should have done by that time. It was the doom of genius to be unloved while living, and honoured when dead; and she almost wept at the vision her fancy had called up, when the sound of the dinner bell suddenly reminded her that life still had duties, and that dining was one of them.

She went down, prepared to be on the defensive, in case the world chose to be satirical about St. Edmund's Mission, and the stationer's shop. But her preparations were thrown away—it was nothing new for Edith to be at the Mission in Lent; and neither Sir Jesse, nor the Fords, who had been asked to meet him, made any comment on the peculiar circumstances of her present absence. Edith's engagement was now treated as a matter of course, and Mr. Bruce was mentioned with the due amount of sympathy and regard, as already belonging to the family. Miss Ford asked many questions, but all in a tone of interest that soon set Alice at her ease; and Alice kept the whole table amused by her version of sundry anecdotes, told by Gabriel on his sofa—anecdotes the easier to retail, that they redounded more to the credit of his friends than of himself. It was much safer to talk of Martin's rifle-shooting, and Joel's good-humour, than of the brave chieftain ever uppermost in her mind; and Gabriel's voice, as he dilated on the Ironhand's performances in the chase or on the trail, ringing in her ear as she spoke, her narrative was given with an amount of spirit that met with deserved applause.

"Forrest said his boys were all crazy about the Ironhand," said

Hartley: "if he tells them such stories, I do not wonder the good man groans at parting with him. He is a very singular fellow—I should like to find out his own story."

"Best left untold, perhaps," said Burlington Ford. "Miss Kerr tells hers delightfully, but Leather-stocking heroes are mostly confined to novels, and if half turn out to be true, it will be as much as we ought to expect. The other half we had better not inquire into."

"Take care, Burlington," said Helen, laughing, "Miss Kerr's indignant eyes are on you, and an artist's anger is a serious matter. We shall have you gibbeted as a warning to posterity, after the fashion of Michel Angelo."

"I beg Miss Kerr's pardon. Is this gentleman a friend of hers?"

"He helped me in difficulties," said Alice, indignantly.

"Exactly so. You had lost your purse, I think?"

"Yes, I had. Why?"

"Why? Was not that rather a curious coincidence?"

"Come, come, Ford, that is going too far," said Hartley.

"I have not made a step beyond acknowledged facts, Carroll. Nobody mentions this man's father, or seems to know anything about him; and where people have no past, I am always doubtful about present and future."

"Mr. Bruce *has* mentioned his father," said Alice. "He believes that he met with some severe misfortune—which affected his head."

"Only his head, Miss Kerr?" asked Burlington.

"Is not that bad enough?"

"Quite so: but it might have extended to his neck."

"Don't tell Bruce what he says, Miss Kerr," said Hartley, "or there will be another neck in danger. However blind may be his belief, I should not like to be the one to try and open his eyes."

"My dear fellow," said Burlington Ford, "I never try to open men's eyes. One third of the world is blind by accident, and another third by choice, and so long as they do not jostle us into the ditch, why make them angry by telling them they cannot see? There is no advantage in too much eyesight; indeed, in some dark weather, I am not sure that they do not have the best of it."

"You would not spend your time as Forrest and his set are doing: in trying to make men see?"

Burlington Ford filled his glass, and held it up to the light.

"If life's vintage were as clear as yours, I might; but it is waste of cruelty to make people 'drink, and see the spider.' Let them alone, and no harm may come; but why show men the puddle they are drinking, when they must e'en drink, whether or no?"

"As Edith is not here to answer you," said Tiny, rising, "we must leave you to settle it among yourselves. It is too deep for us, Alice, is it not?"

Alice made no answer; she followed her companions into the drawing-room, and, while they were chatting over the fire, sought out

her favourite amusement, a large volume of engravings—but without drawing from them the wonted solace. What she had just heard jarred painfully on her lately awakened sense of duty; and the glories of architecture on which her eyes were resting, the church of the Spaniard, the palace of the Moor, faded before her mental vision, as compared with the dull, dark streets of St. Edmund's, and the rough desks and benches of the Mission school. The artist's triumphs over the hewn stone—the builder's quaint handling of the knotty olive wood—what were they, in the beauties of their results, compared with the patience and skill that were working there, bringing good out of evil, till lives, that seemed as hopelessly grimed into ugliness as the boys' faces, became as pleasant to look upon as some of those faces after they had learned the rudiments of washing? But here came the puzzling question—why was it that clever people—not only such as used to smoke in her father's atelier, but Mr. Ford and his sister, for instance—treated all this as a sort of weak mistake, while they exalted art and literature to the skies?"

As she revolved this query, Helen Ford moved to her side.

"I have been watching your face," she said, in a tone of assumed gravity, "and I am certain you have not forgiven my brother."

"Indeed," said Alice, taken by surprise, "I would not take such a liberty."

"Now I call that perfectly delicious. You original little mortal, I wonder your friends can bear to let you go away. May I see the famous likeness?"

"I have not brought it here; it was to be a present to Mr. Forrest."

"Exactly—his sister's portrait could not very well be presented to anybody else. It must have been a study in itself to see her sitting, and you pretending to take her likeness, while all the while you were preparing that charming surprise for our dear Edith—ah! you know what I mean, I see. Clare confided the secret to me: and I am to be trusted."

"I am not so sure of that," thought Alice. But she was afraid to offer any opposition; and, fetching her portfolio in silence, she took out of it the drawing which Mrs. Carroll had seen—a hasty sketch, but a speaking likeness of Gabriel Bruce on his sofa. Helen Ford looked, admired, and criticised, but even her criticisms implied a compliment; and after one furtive glance at the couch on which Tiny had thrown herself in an attitude of profound repose, went on to observe how pleased Edith would be.

"And yet, Miss Kerr, does it not occur to you that fortune deals unfairly by some of us—when one is allowed to have so much more than the rest? Because you are rich, you are to have your riches trebled; because you have all the best of the vintage, no one else is to taste the wine. And, as must naturally be the case, the fact of possessing so much, makes you prize it comparatively little."

"I don't know—I have not been tried," said Alice, perplexed by her manner.

"But Edith has. And this I will boldly say, that much as she will appreciate your kind thought of her, she will not prize that likeness as he does hers."

"Of course not. Why, the Matilda was sketched by my father!"

"Do you really believe that is why he bought it for such a sum? You must know better than that. But tell me, Alice, for I see you are a keen observer for your age, if Gabriel Bruce had failed in his enterprise, and his appointment had not been kept, say for six months more—if he had failed altogether, and come back poorer than he went out—do you believe she would have waited, and given all up for his sake? *I* don't. She would have told herself, and us, that it was her duty not to marry him; and she would have followed her duty in another direction, where, no doubt, she would have been able to do immense good. No one understands more about duty—or less about real love."

"I don't believe it," said Alice.

"You will some day—and so, I am convinced, will he. His own passion absorbs him now, but in time he will crave for some return; and that cold formality of hers, which will not take a step except by rule—will that satisfy a man who has slaved for five years on a bare hope? No—she feels, and justly, that she owes him his recompense, and she gives it in her own graceful fashion; but if she had ever loved him as he deserved, he would have known it before. I only hope they may be happy!"

She took up Gabriel's likeness, and walked with it to the fire, and before Alice had found courage to ask for it again, the gentlemen joined them. Sir Jesse, seeing her portfolio open, came up to her with his coffee-cup in his hand, and began to talk about his daughter's portrait. No doubt Mrs. Carroll had been good enough to explain the peculiar difficulties of the case—owing to Myra's health and irritable nerves: but there was another problem to be solved, with regard to the picture itself—and Miss Kerr might perhaps hit upon some happy suggestion.

"I see," he continued, as he turned over her collection, "that, like all good artists, you make studies of your pictures beforehand. Perhaps, when I have explained my difficulty, you will try what can be done."

Alice expressed her willingness, and looked curious. He drew a chair close to hers, and his voice dropped confidentially.

"One of my poor child's peculiarities is, that when once a fancy has taken root in her mind it is hopeless to try and remove it. And in this case, her fancy is to be taken with a particular set of jewels—they were her poor mother's—now in her grandmother's keeping, and of considerable value. Myra was told they would be hers when she was grown up, and has dreamed of them ever since; and in a

rash moment, when coaxing her to sit for her likeness, I promised the diamonds should be included. Now, to dress a young girl in such ornaments would be simply ridiculous—the question is, how can they be introduced?"

"I see," said Alice. "It reminds me of the puzzle about Bajazet, or Tamerlane, or somebody, who was lame of one leg, blind of one eye, and with one arm shorter than the other; and his portrait was to be done without showing any of his defects, or the painter was to lose his head."

Sir Jesse was rather amused. "We will not expose yours to such a risk, Miss Kerr. How was it managed?"

"I believe he was made to kneel on the leg, shut the eye, and draw a bow with the arm, and that the result was highly satisfactory—though it sounds to me hideous. Let me see how your problem is to be met? Miss Strahan cannot wear the diamonds; that is certain; but she may be looking at them. Stay—I have an idea—something in this way——"

And, seizing pen and ink, she dashed in an outline of a girl with a half open casket beside her, a necklace in her hand, and her lap full of flowers; the head a little on one side, and an innocent look of perplexity in the attitude and expression, as if she had been given her choice between the two, and could not make up her mind. It was in these unfinished designs that Alice's power, at present, showed itself: whatever might be her capability of carrying out her conceptions, in themselves they had the mark of genius, and Sir Jesse was very much pleased. He begged her to study the design carefully, and to hold herself in readiness for a speedy departure, as he expected to hear from Mrs. Salisbury on the following day.

"If Myra appears eager about it, there will be no time to lose," he added; "but one thing I must impress on you—unless you attend particularly to my private instructions, you will find your task harder than you suppose. Try and win Myra's confidence, and let her know, *first, in private*, what your plan is, before you mention it to Mrs. Salisbury. What the child approves her grandmother will approve; but if it is discussed beforehand, Myra may refuse to sit, and then nothing can be done. You see, Miss Kerr, I have your reputation to think of, as well as my own satisfaction; and I should like the drawing to have every advantage—with a view to exhibition."

His eye was on her face as he held out this lure, and he could see the glow that suffused her cheeks. She stammered out her thanks, and promised faithful compliance with all his wishes. The rest of the party having by this time begun to take an interest in the discussion, Alice's design was handed round; and though of course half a dozen suggestions were made, the final verdict was in its favour—as Sir Jesse had intended it to be. He soon after took his leave, telling Alice she would hear from him the next day.

"But what is all this," asked Tiny, when he was gone, "about those diamonds belonging to his late wife? I thought they were Mrs. Salisbury's private property."

"Of course, and so they are," said Hartley. "But he likes to speak of them as his own: at any rate in equity. I am told there were some rather sharp words between the two, as to the right of possession, after Lady Strahan's death—he maintained they had been given, while she knew perfectly well they had only been lent. It made a coolness between them for some time."

"They are splendid diamonds, are they not?" asked Helen Ford, her eyes emitting a transient glow.

"Unique, I believe," said her brother. "There were a dozen bets about their value, that year that poor Lady Strahan appeared in them. I remember my father saying that Mrs. Salisbury's father had collected them in India, and that their colour and water were the admiration of the best judges. 'No fear of Strahan's house shaking,' he observed, 'while his wife can wear trinkets fit for a queen.' There were some ugly rumours afloat at that time: but it seems my father was right."

"Miss Kerr is the favourite of fortune," said Helen Ford; "I envied her her gift before, but I am doubly envious now, for the wish nearest to my heart has long been to see the Salisbury diamonds. I only wonder Mrs. Salisbury ventures to keep such valuables in her house, instead of at her banker's."

"She has her own reasons, you may depend upon it," said her brother; and the conversation dropped.

It was not till the visitors were gone, that Alice recollected her precious likeness: when she found, to her extreme consternation, that Miss Ford had carried it away, and that Mrs. Carroll was only diverted by the incident.

"My dear child, when you know the world better, these things will never surprise you—people understand very little about honesty in these days, and Helen was always famous for getting anything she wanted. It does not really matter, after all, and you ought to take it as a compliment. You would not grudge it to her, if you knew all. Poor Helen!"

Clare would not, or could not, explain herself further; and Alice had to seek consolation for her loss as best she might, in the resources of her imagination. Leaving her thus employed, we must return to the City, and pay another visit to the model lodging-house.

It may be remembered that old Martin mentioned to Lucy Pyne how a strange lawyer had been to visit him, asking him questions about his past life and present investments. It is needless to explain that this was Mr. Plummer, acting under Sir Jesse's instructions. The lawyer was now unwillingly repeating the experiment—the results of the first having been slightly unsatisfactory. From the little he had gathered, he believed the old man would think over the

hints he had thrown out, and be rather glad than otherwise, to have them made clear. His experience—such as it was—had taught Mr. Plummer that no one, in any grade, was quite proof against the temptation of adding to his income; and if he could bring old Martin to look at some of the dazzling reports with which his pockets were stored, it would go a long way towards establishing that degree of confidence between them which would be favourable to Sir Jesse's purpose.

The instructions of that gentleman had been brief; they amounted to this: "Find out if he is the man I remember; if he is, *get hold of him.*" And the readiest way of accomplishing this last, would be to get hold of his money. That is always an old man's weakest side, thought Mr. Plummer.

He hated the work and the man who employed him; and detested the narrow, dirty streets through which he had to walk to the old man's lodgings. But no trace of this appeared in his manner when he entered—taking old Martin by surprise in the blandest tone of cordial regard.

"Glad to see you looking so well, my dear sir! I should have been round here before, but my time has been so taken up—business so active—fresh openings everywhere for capital and enterprise—if only one could be sure of dealing with the right people, as you say. Well," drawing in a chair, and pulling out papers, "is there anything new? I have thought so much of things that dropped from you the other day, Mr. Martin; I wish I had come to you ten years ago—your shrewdness and judgment would have been the making of me then. As it is, I cannot rest till I have had your opinion on some of these. They look well on paper, very well, and are highly spoken of—but an experienced man of business, like yourself, can see into things which escape us. I should like you to look these over at your leisure."

"I'll do that, sir, if it will gratify you, but my sight is not what it used to be, and I read very little," was the old man's answer. "As to giving advice, my day for that is over. It was not taken when it might have done good, and it is not likely to be cared for now."

"My client was not far wrong, then, Mr. Martin, when he told me he was sure you had had some painful experience; not on your own account, but on that of your friends. His words to me were, 'The value of men like him is often not found out till they retire.'"

"And who may this polite gentleman be?"

"Excuse me, my dear sir, we do not give up our clients' names, unless on business. This I am permitted to state, that he had been making inquiries after you in several quarters, among others, of Sir Jesse Strahan (a well-known name, Strahan and Co.); and Sir Jesse, I was given to understand, spoke of you in the highest terms. Are you acquainted with him?"

"Aye, to my sorrow; and what I can have done to deserve *his* good words, I don't know. I can't give him mine."

"Indeed? You alarm me, on my client's account: Sir Jesse's name stands so high."

"So high that people forget to ask how it reached the height. You spoke of my advice being wanted, sir; here it is for you and your client, who is pleased to speak so handsomely of me—if you value your peace and your honesty, keep clear of Sir Jesse Strahan."

"I am much obliged to you for telling me this: it shows how one may be mistaken," said the lawyer, warmly. "Do you know, I had been under the impression that Sir Jesse was a friend of yours, and that your present income came to you through his hands."

"Through his hands? Look here, sir—this is not a grand place, and my neighbours are only working-people, and all I ever cared for are gone, so I have nothing left me now but to wait for my turn to go; but if I could change it all for everything money could buy, and that money came through Sir Jesse Strahan, I wouldn't stoop to take it. What I have is little enough, but it came to me from a man I loved and would have laid down my life to save! Aye! and old and feeble as I am, I feel, at times, as if I could get up from this chair, and go afoot till I dropped on the road, for a chance of one more look in his face."

The words were scarcely spoken, when a voice was heard in the doorway. "Mr. Martin, may I come in?"

The old man started, and grasped the elbows of his chair, as he turned his eyes in the direction whence the voice proceeded. Mr. Plummer, whose seat was opposite the door, felt no small curiosity as to whom this visitor could be, whose entry caused such excitement; but all he saw was the form of a young man in a kind of thick shooting-jacket, with a fur pouch slung over his shoulder, and a felt hat in his hand. There was a degree of shyness in his manner, as if he were acting reluctantly in appearing at all; and the amazed stare of old Martin appeared to embarrass him still more.

"I hope I am not disturbing you. I knocked, but you did not answer; so, as the door was not quite shut I pushed it open. My name is Erasmus Martin."

"*Who* did he say?" asked the old man, turning to the lawyer.

"Erasmus Martin, my dear sir—a namesake of your own, apparently—you are both called after a very celebrated man. It must be a singular coincidence: unless, as I hope may be the case, this young gentleman is a relation."

"As I am not a gentleman, and have no relations," observed the new-comer, "I do not quite see how that can be."

"Whoever you are," said old Martin, "come forward, and let me see your face."

His voice was tremulous; his hand shook visibly as he held it out to his visitor; and he gazed up at the dark resolute face with a wistful longing, almost piteous to see. Whatever had raised this emotion, however, it was transient; with a sigh and a shake of the head, he

dropped the bronzed fingers that had touched his own, and made a sign to Martin to take a seat. Martin thanked him, but explained he had not come to interrupt business; Mr. Forrest had asked him to call about some bookshelves, that were waiting, he understood, to be put up. He had his tools with him—should he do the job "right off?" Well, since he was so good, it would be a comfort, the old man answered. Mr. Forrest had promised to send, but the workman was ill, and the books were all spoiling on the floor.

"It's little I read now, but the look of the books reminds me of old times."

He watched with interest the quick, decided movements of his strange visitor, ignoring Mr. Plummer altogether; who, on his part, was quite contented to take his own observations unnoticed. It required only a little mechanical handiness to accomplish the job, and the shelves being made firm and serviceable, Martin arranged the books according to their sizes, and then stood looking round the room, in quest of more work.

"That's a fine bit of carved wood you've got there, sir," he said, nodding at an old chest in one corner, which had evidently been intended for an apartment of higher pretensions.

"Ah, yes, my good young man, so it is; and if you were clever enough to open it for me, I should be proud of my namesake. Something is the matter with the lock. It is a peculiar one; and I can trust no workman to meddle with it."

"Let's have a look at it," cried Martin. He stooped over the chest, and examined the outside of the lock with a scrutiny that gradually changed into eagerness. Pulling a small case out of his pocket, he produced a couple of instruments, with which he went to work so diligently as not to observe that the old man had staggered to his feet, and was standing behind him, leaning on the table. In the pleasure of conquering the difficulty, he forgot everything else, and almost laughed as he plied his tools, and found the metal yielding to his skill.

"It's a bad look-out, this," said Martin, "for I thought this secret belonged to me. Who made this lock, may I ask?"

"Can you open it?" asked the old man, trembling.

"Open it? Yes, I should hope so. Why, I've helped my father to make them, and believed the trick was his property. There it comes!—Why, what on earth is the matter?"

The old man had caught him by the arm, and seemed struggling to speak, the veins swelling in his forehead, his lips moving without a sound. Mr. Plummer, alarmed by the change in his features, came forward to his assistance; and between them they got him back to his chair. He pointed to a cupboard; Martin obeyed the sign, and brought out a small flask of brandy and a wine-glass. A very small quantity, for Martin was careful to administer no more, revived the old man's strength, and his withered fingers clutched at the

hunter's jacket, as if fearful that he would escape unquestioned. A pause ensued, while he was recovering his breath; the young Erasmus had too much humanity to hurry him, and Mr. Plummer, with an air of deep abstraction, helped himself to a glass of the brandy.

"Did you say your father made a lock like that?" was the first question the old man could utter.

"Yes. He taught me the secret. It was his own invention."

"Is he living?"

"No."

"Tell me his name."

"Does a son generally bear a different name from his father?"

"Young man, do not trifle with one on the brink of the grave. No Martin invented that spring; and I never knew but one man who named his son after me. If you are what I would believe, tell me, that I may bless God for his mercy, and embrace you as my son!"

Young Martin's dark face betrayed some hidden emotion. He might have allowed it to find utterance, had not his eyes met those of the lawyer: whose eagerness in listening for once got the better of his caution. With a stern contraction of brow, he drew himself away from the old man's grasp, and took up his hat and tools from the floor.

"If I am not welcome as I am, a settler's son, and a gentleman's servant, I have only to go. I do not choose to answer questions which no one has a right to ask."

The old man's head drooped sadly. "It is true, it is true," he muttered. "I have no right, if he does not give it. Go, sir, if you are angry with me—it is not for me to keep you here—only, when your master can spare you, and you have an idle hour on your hands, I should take another visit as a favour—that is all."

Martin turned away without replying, and concealed his real agitation by a haughty bow. Before he had taken many steps along the street, he found the lawyer at his elbow.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I have no intention of intruding. I only beg permission to give you this card. Whenever you feel disposed to ask for information on subjects that you may find interesting, be so good as to drop a line to that address."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LESSON OUT OF SCHOOL.

THE night school at St. Edmund's, opened, as it had been at first, under difficulty and discouragement, had worked itself by degrees into popular favour—a result in some respects desirable, but not without its disadvantages. The larger the classes became, the harder, of course, they were to control, and it was absolutely necessary that

every one of the wild crew should know that he could not rebel with impunity. Patience, forbearance, any amount of blindness to faults, might be employed by the authorities, so as not to lose a chance; but after a certain point prompt measures were used without scruple, and the lad who had been enjoying the triumph of making a dozen others unruly, would suddenly find himself in the dark, dull street, with the door locked behind him.

The jeers of the public, which usually accompanied such an expulsion, both at the time and afterwards, made this as effectual a punishment as could be devised; and keenly was it felt on the occasion of which we are about to speak, by a young gentleman who had done his very best to deserve it. There was nothing in the damp and fog outside to compensate for the loss of the warmth and light within; and not only had the culprit resisted with all his might, but, stung by the grins of the very comrades who had encouraged his previous disobedience, he remained close to the barred door, hammering it from time to time with his fists, in the hope of provoking somebody to give him a chance of rushing in.

No such chance was given, however. It had gone to Mr. Forrest's heart to turn out Bill Close: but, once turned out, there was no readmission to be gained that night.

Bill Close had often given trouble, and would probably give it as long as he lived. He was one of those aggravating boys who might do you so much credit, and who will only use their wits to waste their own time and everybody else's. Half the pains he took to prevent himself from learning would have made him a tolerable scholar; and when by chance he forgot himself, and allowed his mind to get into his teacher's hand, it was curious how much he remembered, and how quickly he understood. No one had been more fascinated than he by Martin's stories; and the announcement that evening, that the Ironhand was gone into the country, had been too much for his equanimity. The temporary good behaviour which had raised so much hope of permanent amendment, vanished at once; sitting still to hear delightful adventures and escapes was one thing, and submitting to dismal sums and copies was another. Feeling decidedly ill-used, Mr. Bill proceeded to repay the usage in kind after the most approved fashion—stealing his neighbours' books, tearing his own, spilling the ink, making one boy laugh with a grimace, and another start with a pinch, and so forth. From small things he went on to greater, and became so daringly impertinent that, after due warning, he was, as we have seen, turned out.

Finding that he only bruised his knuckles by thumping the door, and that even kicks were too fatiguing to keep up to no purpose, and that the windows were too high to admit of his disturbing a class by making frightful faces at the panes, he was pondering rather gloomily as to what he should do next, when he was startled by hearing a voice say, "Try the chimney, youngster!" He turned, and saw under the

lamp a man in a sailor's dress, smoking a pipe, and evidently much amused by his predicament; and as no one feels a laugh at his expense more than your professed wag, the blood began to tingle in Bill Close's veins, in spite of the cold fog. "You mind your own affairs," he muttered, expecting to be "chaffed" for going to school at all, and prepared, in such a case, to maintain his right to acquire knowledge, in a style that might have amazed his teachers. But the stranger only nodded, took his pipe out of his mouth, and came a few steps nearer.

"What's going on in there, that you're not to see?"

"What's going on?" said Bill, in a tone of virtuous wrath; "why, it's my eddication that's going on; that's what it is—and me left outside! I should like to know what Parliament will say to that, when my friends get up and let 'em know!"

"Turned out of school, eh?" said the sailor, with a smile. "That would be no punishment to some chaps I've seen."

"I daresay, Jack. But you don't see every day them as has been the top of every class and the joy of every master—only spited, along of knowing too much, and saying every lesson off out of his own head afore it could be set to him. Them's the fellows as is kept out of school, for fear the masters should have nothin' to do. But p'r'aps you're going in yourself, to learn your A B C. Don't let me hinder you, Jack—you'll bear improving."

He kept his eye on the stranger while speaking, ready to dart down the street if he showed any disposition to be unpleasant. But the sailor only laughed, and clapped him on the shoulder, declaring he was the smartest lad he had seen since he had been ashore, and that he deserved something better than this.

"Oh, ah," said Bill, as sundry nautical stories returned to his memory, "you'd like to press me, and get me on board fast asleep, and then kick me into the lee scuppers when I said a word that didn't please you. But though I daresay you were going to offer me something to drink, my good man, I won't be putting you in the way of temptation, so you'll not get the chance."

"I declare I never saw such a chap! he talks for all the world like a purser. Suppose I had been going to offer you something to eat, would that affront your friends in Parliament?"

Bill's eyes twinkled. "Well, now I think of it, there is a pie-shop round the corner, and I don't mind speaking up for you—though they only like tip-top company. Got any money?"

The sailor laughed, and pulled out a handful of silver. "I'm on liberty, my lad, and I'll stand treat. I owe you a good turn, for it was a youngster like you that got me a week's leave. Ah! if he was but here, I'll be bound he would be for putting you up to some dodge like his own—mischievous scamp that he is!"

"Ah!" said Bill, excitedly. The sailor jerked his thumb towards the closed door.

"Wouldn't it be a jolly game, now, to have all the bigwigs and parsons, that had shut you out, come round you as if you was the Prince of Wales, squeezing you by the hand, and shoving sovereigns into your pocket, and the newspapers sticking you up in big letters—'Heroic Action of a Boy'—perhaps opening a subscription to buy you a gold watch, to be handed over by the Lord Mayor before he set you down to a grand spread? You would call that good fun, I think?"

"I just think I should."

"Well, that's the sort of thing happened to this young chap: only he being on board ship, though not at sea, it was the Admiralty rewarded him, and he'll be an officer and a gentleman now, all along of his turning the tables on them as tried to spite him. No, I'm not going to give you that story out in the street. Show us where your pie-shop is, and, if one can sit down comfortable, you shall hear all about it."

The pie-shop was found, and a back parlour, some seven feet square, was at their command; and over a dish of indescribable pastry, the sailor delighted his companion with the history of one Valentine Sparks, of the training-ship *Salamander*, who, being the pride of his messmates, for cleverness and spirit, was spited by one of the officers, and put to all kinds of tiresome work, and always came off with such flying colours that the enemy was ready to die with vexation, and avenged himself by stopping leave all round; and how Valentine declared he'd get a holiday for the whole ship, and kept his word—for being set to trim the lamps, and knowing the *Salamander* to be quite unseaworthy, he just set the oil alight, and then sang out "Fire!" and ran to give the alarm. The rotten old hulk was soon in a blaze, and there was he, in the thick of the scramble, helping the little ones to escape, handing buckets, swarming up ropes, dragging his enemy out of danger when he was too scared to move, and being quite the hero of the scene—clasped in the arms of the captain when all was over, and thanked before all hands as the bravest boy he had ever seen. A week's leave was granted all round, and the youngsters got pocket-money and treats to no end; and Valentine was to be fitted out for the Royal Navy, where he was safe to be promoted and make his fortune.

How many pies Bill Close consumed during this narrative it would be unsafe to conjecture; but he did not lose a single detail, and only the massive quality of the pastry prevented his shouting aloud. But the wind-up rather staggered him.

"Nothing been done to him for doing it?" he asked.

"Done to him? Why, nobody knows but me and one or two more: and as to the *Salamander*, the newspapers said she was in such a state as was a crying shame to the service, and whoever burnt her deserved a pension. You see he never meant to do harm to anybody, only to get the leave, and have his fun. I wish he was alongside of

us now; he'd get you into that school in no time, or"—here he dropped his voice significantly—"he'd make them wish they'd never put you out."

The boy's eyes sparkled, and he drew closer to his new friend, who whispered in his ear what seemed to be the most exquisite joke he had ever heard, for with a half stifled "Oh, don't!" he went off into such a roar of laughter that he was obliged to roll on the floor.

"Wonders will never cease," remarked Mr. Forrest to his sister, a day or two subsequent to this incident. "A troublesome monkey, whom I cannot help liking, and had to turn out of school for bad behaviour, has come back of his own accord, so penitent, so anxious to be re-admitted, that I should hardly have trusted him if I had not seen he was bursting with fun—and their lives want enlivening, poor lads. He has been helping in the workshop with our new benches as if he were to be paid by the day, and I never knew him before do a thing he could possibly help. I wonder if Miss Leicester has been talking him over."

"She would talk any of you over, I think," returned Miss Thirza, drily. She had never relinquished her first opinion: that Edith Leicester was a fine, fashionable lady, who only cared for admiration and excitement.

In the present instance, however, it appeared that Miss Leicester's influence had not been called into play. She only heard the story from Lucy, who at the same time presented a request for a few hours' leave of absence. Her friend Caterina had sent to ask if she could go round to her lodgings and alter one of her costumes; and as it was made a personal favour, and the actress had been kind and friendly to her and Grace, she should be glad not to refuse. Edith readily gave her consent, only stipulating that Lucy returned in good time. "Grace would not have gone away in comfort, you know, if she had not felt sure you were safe with me."

Lucy promised as required, but made no comment upon the mention of Grace: for, in truth, she strongly doubted whether she had gone in comfort at all. Her eagerness to leave London, if only for a short time, had made her volunteer to accompany Miss Kerr to Highlevels, as her maid—Alice's friends being of unanimous opinion that she was not to travel alone—and they had accordingly gone into Devonshire together, under Martin's escort. But at the moment of parting, Grace had been so agitated that Lucy longed to make her change her mind, and more than ever wondered what could be amiss with her.

A few cheering lines, written to announce their safe arrival, had relieved the younger sister of some of her anxiety. Now her thoughts were full of her friend, Caterina, and the work she was required to execute. The world looked very different now to Lucy from what it had done a few weeks ago; she no longer even wished to become a

fine lady by Caterina's help; but a certain amount of glamour still hovered about that mysterious existence beyond the footlights, which all her respect for Miss Leicester's wisdom could not dispel. It was doomed to meet rather a severe shock that evening.

The home of the actress consisted of one untidy room, where she, her mother, and her young sister slept at night, and lived all day—and a little one beyond it, which served as kitchen, wash-house, and coal-cellar. The state of confusion in which Lucy found everything would be hard to describe; in its ordinary condition the room was a practical illustration of half the good motto—for it seemed to be a place for everything, with nothing in its place; and now the miscellaneous accumulation was strewed over with the appurtenances of Caterina's stage wardrobe. She herself was ironing at a rickety table, and her mother, a sour-looking woman, was performing some cookery over the fire, the smell of which, mingled with other odours, was not calculated to improve the appetite of such an invalid as sat in a wicker chair on the hearth, muffled up in an old ragged shawl. This was Caterina's sister, employed, like herself, by the theatre, and considered one of the cleverest fairies in the establishment—so clever, that she had excited the jealousy of some of her rivals, and they had contrived, as Lucy was told, to expose her to a severe chill, from which she was suffering now. It was well for her, the mother explained, that it was the slack season, for when the Easter piece came on, Honor *must* be well, or lose her salary, and most likely her situation; and they couldn't afford that. Times were hard, and it was no good making a fuss and a bother about coughs and colds, when a girl had her bread to earn. It was little enough they were paid, and there was no end of trouble in getting them ready, and work they must. No one disputed the necessity: but Caterina shook her head, and seemed to feel it incumbent on her to explain that, while there were so many eager to be taken on at the theatre, no grace was given to any defaulters; at the same time, the salaries were often in arrear. Honor's pay was stopped while she was ill, and that made it harder to get her all she required. Here the mother broke in again, with a long string of complaints—how the money was so slow in coming in that, when it did come, no one seemed the better for it (which Lucy could quite believe), and parties ran so high in the company that Caterina did not get fair play, or her salary would have been raised long ago—and prices were so dear it was all they could do to live. And it slipped out, in the course of all this, that the difficulty of paying for a new costume had led to their sending for Lucy to transform the old one: and it crossed her mind, as she listened and sympathised, that her own pay looked rather precarious. But this did not prevent her throwing herself heartily into the business, out of gratitude for past good will. She only wished, as she said, that they could have had Grace to help—her skill in cutting out was worth twice as much as her own.

"Ah, your sister has gone into the country, I hear," said Caterina, looking wistfully at the crouching figure in the wicker chair; "it's my heart's blood I'd give to be able to send Honor out of all the smother of London streets. The doctor said it was pure air she wanted; and where we are to get that I suppose he knows, for *I* don't."

"Now I say, Caterina, if you put such fancies into the child's head, you may just pay the cost—you and your fine young man; and it's mighty little change he'll give you out of your week's salary, if he once gets it into those smooth fingers of his, that are ready to help themselves out of other folks' pockets!"

"When Tonio gets a good place, he'll give it all back again, ten times over, mother," said Caterina, hastily.

"Oh, sure, no doubt, and last year's snow on the back of it, my darling! It's queens and princesses we shall be, Honor dear, when Tonio brings us his wages—sitting up in silks and satins, behind a pasteboard chicken and a make-believe taypot! It don't matter pinching now and starving your mother, so long as there's enough to keep Tonio from the trouble of work! Ah, you may look as glum as you please, but such company as he keeps ——"

"Whisht, mother, whisht!" said Caterina, looking round uneasily. The woman seemed to recollect herself, and muttering something which Lucy could not hear, snatched up a basket and went out, to the evident relief of both her daughters. Honor, who had been struggling for some time to suppress her cough, now yielded to the paroxysm that almost choked her, and Caterina left her irons to cool while she fondled the sufferer in her arms.

"It's the gas and the red fire, that is so bad for her," she said, with a sorrowful glance at the flushed face, "and being up so late at night. I wish she could have had a place with a lady: but the mother thought she had better be with me."

"Would she not find service dull after being among the beautiful fairies?" asked Lucy, holding up the gauzy skirt she was trimming.

Honor's eyes opened in amazement. "Do you think fairies beautiful?"

Lucy owned that she did, and had once wished to make one of them—they all looked so happy together.

"You don't know how hot and tired we get," said Honor. "I wish I was never going to be a fairy again."

The large tears were in her eyes, and Caterina's filled at the sight. She kissed and fondled her encouragingly, with assurances that it would only be for a little while longer; as soon as they had made money enough, she should go into the country: perhaps—who could tell?—to Lucy's farm. What? didn't she know that Lucy was to be married some day, to a fine, tall soldier, who had made enough at the diggings to give her cows, and pigs, and poultry of her own, and everything that was delightful?

"Tell her all about it, *Lucia mia*, for I hear I am called. I'll be

back in a minute." And away she hurried, as her name was again shouted from below. Directly they were alone, the sick girl raised herself in her chair.

"Lucy, do you like Mr. Jones?"

"I don't know much about him. Look here, Honor, Grace sent me these violets in a letter; I'll give them to you."

"Oh! they *are* sweet!" said the poor feverish child, burying her face among the fragrant petals, "not a bit like bought things. I dream sometimes of being in the fields, and under the trees; but I never can dream that I smell the flowers, nothing but varnish, and deal, and horrid red fire, that chokes me. I shall be so glad when they get the lucky-stone from Mr. Bruce: mother will then have money for the rent, and Caterina will take me into the country!"

"What do you mean, Honor?"

"Whisht! it's a secret, and they'd be mad with me for telling, if they thought I knew. I hear, when they think I'm asleep; and I know Mr. Bruce got his money by finding the lucky-stone, and he always wears it round his neck; and Mr. Jones wanted Grace to get it for him, and that's how they quarrelled. But he means to get it himself, while she is away, and then we shall all be lucky, and he'll marry her when she comes back."

"The child must be light-headed," thought Lucy, too startled to speak aloud. A vague terror seized on her nerves, and made her long for some excuse to put down her work and escape; but the sound of returning footsteps seemed to remind Honor that she had said too much, and she started up from her chair with an imploring gesture. "You won't say a word? You won't tell mother? She'll almost kill me if you do!"

It was absolutely necessary to give her the promise required, and on Caterina's entrance, followed by her mother, the business of the costume was diligently resumed—Lucy counting the minutes as she stitched away, in her ardent longing to get out of the house. But even when her task was accomplished, escape was not easy, for the supper was just ready, and nothing would satisfy them but she must share it for once—they would take no refusal; indeed, the mother's face grew so resentful at last, that Lucy yielded, out of fright. It took some time to clear the table, and when they were at last sitting down, there came a tap on the door, and a man's voice outside asked for Miss Pyne. Caterina flew to let him in, proffering a hundred thousand welcomes, and showing so much delight in making his acquaintance, that Joel at first did not perceive Lucy's agitation.

Thinking he had been sent to fetch her, she was hurrying on her bonnet and shawl, but both her entertainers raised a vehement protest against her leaving them like this. Her friends were theirs, and right welcome to the best they had, and Joel must sit down with them, if only for five minutes, to break their bread and drink their healths;

and when, by cross-examination, it transpired that no one had sent for Lucy, there was no excuse for showing them such an affront.

"You'll just make me believe some one has been poisoning your mind against us," was the remark of Honor's mother, and a glance at Honor's frightened face took Lucy's courage away again. She turned to Joel for counsel, and as he seemed disposed to show courtesy to these hospitable friends, she made no further opposition.

It was nearly ten o'clock before they at last took leave; and not even the pleasure of hearing Joel tell good stories, and seeing how well they were received, could prevent Lucy from feeling, as she left the house, that she was escaping out of a cage.

"What made you come after me?" was her first question, as they walked down the street.

"What made you send for me, if you didn't think I should come?"

"Send for you?"

"Yes. I had a message that Miss Pyne was afraid to walk back alone, and would be glad if I would come and fetch her."

"Joel, Joel, what does it mean? I *never* sent anyone!"

He stopped short, and looked at her. A very few words of explanation were enough. Then they both hurried on, they hardly knew why, only the same thought was in the mind of both, that they had been detained on purpose. As they turned into the street next to that in which the Mission-house stood, they heard the school-bell ringing, and at the same moment a strong light shot up, reflecting a red glare on the opposite houses. Shouts rang out in different directions; and as they rushed on, they saw people running together, and met Bill Close, blackened like a sweep, and so intent on bawling "Fire!" that he did not see Joel till the latter seized him by the collar.

"It's all right—it's in the school-yard—the workshop," he gasped out, as Joel shook him angrily. "I've done all I could—they've got a ladder up at the gentleman's window."

"They *have?*" repeated Joel. He pressed Lucy's arm one moment, and then darted from her side—rushed along the street, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, but that some treachery was going on against his master. There was the Mission-house—and there, at Gabriel's window, was indeed a ladder, and a man in a fireman's helmet in the act of entering his room.

(To be continued.)

EUGÈNE SCRIBE.

AUGUSTIN EUGÈNE SCRIBE, the greatest play-writer of modern times, who filled five of the most important Paris Theatres for more than twenty years with his varied and racy lucubrations, was born in 1791 at a "Magasin de Nouveautés" in the Rue St. Denis. His father died whilst he was in his cradle, and Madame Scribe, having realised a modest fortune, sent him to the College of St. Barbe. Like many of the honest bourgeoisie, she was ambitious for her son, and expected that his successful studies would lead to the Bar, and the Bar to the Chamber of Deputies. But it was soon evident that the law had no attractions for him. His heart was elsewhere. His desire was to escape, as soon as the day's work was over, to the "Rue de Chartres," or the "Variétés," where, with his friend Germain Delavigne, the brother of the poet, he nursed the secret ambition of one day being able to amuse an enlightened and appreciative audience. But like many another author, Scribe did not rise all at once into popularity. His first plays were pitilessly condemned by the theatrical public, and after about fourteen or fifteen undeniable failures, he is reported to have exclaimed, "What a profession! Four or five more attempts, and then I give it up." "*Four or five more!*" is the comment of Legouvé. "The expression is adorable! 'Only four or five more throws,' says the gambler. 'One more look,' says the lover; and he never goes, and the gambler continues losing, and Scribe goes on writing."

Dramatic invention is doubtless a peculiar faculty, and one accorded to few, being as it were a double gift, combining that of imagination and the perception of what subjects and situations will produce the greatest effect upon the stage. Our author possessed it in the very highest degree, and so completely identified himself with his pursuit that everything that happened in his own life, or that of others, was capable to him of metamorphosis into a play, even nature herself appearing in the light of a decoration. An anecdote is told of his leading a friend up to a lovely point of view in his own domain of Sericourt, and saying, "Look! is it not charming? *The first scene in the 'Muette'!*" It was as much his nature to invent as it is that of water to flow, and sunshine to illuminate.

M. Fortoul, who traced his portrait at the moment when the success of "Valerie" and the "Mariage d'Argent" had opened to him the doors of the Théâtre Français, expresses himself in these words: "He is laborious and honest, but not having been ambitious enough in the beginning, he is now perhaps almost too much so. He is quick rather than perceptive, more a jester than a comedian, more skilful than intelligent. He makes the whole dramatic art to consist in probability

and in the imitation of reality, not quite knowing that there is anything beyond. If you seek to measure him by any higher standard you will find in him no other originality than that of having dared to laugh at everything in spite of everything!" But his talent for amusing and also for instructing an audience is indubitable, and it has been said that "if one of our posterity, a man of future ages, should desire to know, not what an epoch concealed of force, weakness, desires, sins, resources, hopes and fears, but that which it displayed to the looker-on in the way of manners, customs, opinions, phantasies, follies—how the nineteenth century walked, spoke, lived—in a word, how it appeared—he should not address himself to Chateaubriand, or Lamartine, or Victor Hugo, or George Sand, or M. de Vigny, or M. de Balzac, or M. Alexandre Dumas,—he should go straight to M. Scribe. With him he would find a mixed and moving society, at once frivolous and severe, little, yet full of pretension—more languid than passionate, verbose, uneasy, agitated, busy, disturbed, and covetous; a great love of material good things, and worship of the golden calf piercing through a certain sentimental phraseology; titles, pensions, industrial enterprises, revenues, fortunes tumbled from the skies, or from America, all amassed upon his pages. Hatred and love have there but a very secondary importance." The school of Romanticism was at its height and he became its antithesis. Whilst in "Hernani" and "Marion Delorme" we are carried away in the whirlwind of passion, Scribe, in his "Mariage d'Argent," "Une Chaine," and "Les Premières Amours," undertakes the defence of reason, virtue, and parental authority. His muse is of the fireside, and his domestic scenes were an education for the young of his day. By the law of ascension natural to talent, whilst representing the simple politics and honest patriotism of the bourgeoisie, he elevated himself above the world of trade, but still could never thoroughly associate himself with the world of fashion. The doors of aristocratic drawing-rooms were opened to him, he was applauded nightly by all the rank and beauty of Paris, welcomed and made much of wherever he appeared, but he was never able perfectly to comprehend the language, the traditional elegance, of the Faubourg St. Germain; he was much more at home in the Chaussée d'Antin, and his comedies, rich as they are in pure and delicate feeling, bear the twofold character of the middle-class mind. The author is visibly at once conservative and revolutionist, ready with a loyal word for the king, and a lampoon for the ministers; upholding the throne and brimful of censure for the government; above all, honestly intolerant of the interested place-seekers who endeavour to make their recantations sound like conversions. A story is told of him that, at the commencement of the Second Empire, about 1854, meeting an old college comrade whose name had made some stir in the world, he was asked by him what new comedy he had in hand. "I think I have got hold of an excellent subject this time," replied

our author. "I am going to put on the stage a peer of France nnder Louis Philippe taking office under Napoleon the Third. Cannot you fancy the exquisite humbug which would be talked by such a man endeavouring to invest himself with an air of consistency?"

His former friend parting from him hastily without any appearance of appreciating the subject, Scribe began to have doubts of its turning out quite so amusing as he had anticipated, until, upon opening the evening papers, he saw the announcement that M. de ——, ancient peer of France, had been named as one of the Ministry, when he at once understood how little pleasing the précis of his new drama could have been to the man whose character he had described.

Scribe's career of triumph had already begun when Delestre Poirson engaged him for his theatre, interdicting him any other stage than the Gymnase, for which during several years he brought forth play after play with inexhaustible rapidity. Not, however, alone and unaided; he had a host of coadjutors, who were perpetually flocking to his house, their arms full of manuscripts, or waiting in his antechamber for an audience. "Our century," writes M. de Mirecourt, "has been destined to behold one of the most curious phenomena which has ever arisen on the horizon of letters! We speak of the strange crotchet which has latterly entered into the heads of authors to join themselves together in twos or even threes *to make a genius—pour avoir de l'esprit.* It is original, but is certainly not a sign of literary progress. On the contrary, it is a sign of poverty, self-doubt, and impotence. A strong and healthy talent has no need to call in the help of another talent, but since what is called 'collaboration,' is the fashion of the day, in spite of all logic and good sense, let us, at least, do justice to M. Scribe as being the most honest and most laborious of 'collaborateurs.' Not content only to do his own work, he undertakes that of other people, and so transforms the scenes that their own authors fail to recognise them. He seems to think it a point of honour to remould all the plots which are offered to him. He substitutes a dialogue of his own, finds new incidents, invents new situations. According to this system, when a piece is bad he converts it into something good, and on the other hand, if it is good, he makes it very bad." M. Dupin having brought him a very poor composition, he set to work to alter it completely, and in about three weeks invited the author to dinner and to accompany him to the Gymnase. The play began, and Dupin whispered, "It is very good—excellent! a capital plot. Capital characters." And then, when it was over, "Diable! the worst of it is that one of the situations reminds me of a scene in *our* play." The curtain fell, and the play was announced for repetition by the authors, Messieurs Scribe and Dupin. "Bah!" said Scribe. "It is a bad father who does not know his own children."

One evening, at a large theatrical dinner, a young writer, who had never attempted to join authorship with Scribe, began to attack him

in an outrageous manner. "He has made three hundred pieces," he said, "thanks to a whole concourse of talented and experienced men. Let the proposition be established, and it results that, in this immense dramatic business, the genius of M. Scribe is to that of his coadjutors as one is to forty."

"I must beg to assert that you are in error," said M. de Carmouche.

"In what way?" asked the young man.

"By the proof of personal experience. I have written twelve or fifteen vaudevilles with M. Scribe, and I can safely assert that there is not a word of mine in any one of them!" There were present at the banquet many other writers who had also joined with Scribe and who fully confirmed the words of M. de Carmouche, but that did not prevent a bon mot going the round of the Academy, when Scribe took the seat left vacant by the death of M. Arnault, to the effect that it was not a chair which should be offered to the successful author, but a form which could accommodate his forty-eight "collaborateurs."

In matters of finance M. Scribe was more than commonly successful, and the market value of his talent, from first to last, went on steadily increasing. In 1812 the "Auberge" was purchased for a hundred francs. In 1816 "Comte d'Ory" sold for four hundred. In 1822 "Valerie" produced three thousand, and in 1833 "Bertrand et Raton" rose to four thousand five hundred. His annual dramatic gains have been known to amount to enormous sums, but with the head of a financier he is acknowledged to bear the heart of an artist. No needy author ever appealed to him in vain, and his acts of charity, generosity, and sympathy would fill a volume. In cases where a pecuniary donation could not be offered, he would give his "collaboration" in a manner which the following anecdote will sufficiently describe. A lady who had been governess to a school brought him the manuscript of a vaudeville. Scribe refused it, being overpowered with work, but at her repeated request at last consented to look it over. The next day he heard that the authoress was in a state of deplorable destitution, and leaving his other labours, he arranged, corrected, remade the piece, and had it acted at the Gymnase in the space of six weeks. Unhappily it was condemned, but Scribe gave orders to his agent to hand over twelve hundred francs to the author, who, fully believing in the success of her piece, inundated her benefactor with plans of plays, and could never understand why he made forty or fifty conjointly with Mélesville, and only one with herself.

It has become the fashion of the times, in a certain literary set, to assert that Scribe's day is over. France, it is true, may count more elevated talents and more distinguished literary triumphs, but it will be hard to find a more original or more discursive genius, or one who may adopt with greater truth the device which the self-made man had engraved on his crest—a pen—with under it the words—

Inde fortuna et libertas.

A WORLD BETWEEN.

By Mrs. G. Linnæus Banks, Authoress of "The Manchester Man."

III.

OSCAR did not die, though for very many days he was delirious and life trembled in the balance. Above all his injuries there was concussion of the brain. And no wonder: he had gone down with all the force of Fairclough's superadded weight; and, but for the mosses and weeds which covered the providential rock like a cushion, he must have fractured his skull. As it was he had escaped by little less than a miracle.

We had hired a nurse from the village, and Jock and Thomas shared alternately with me my constant watch by Oscar's bedside during his delirium. Aunt Lydia also was the best of good nurses. Yet, as the fright had thrown our darling Amy also on a sick pillow, I was glad when Alicia Proctor said, "You will be worn out with your double duty. You must suffer me to relieve you occasionally. Between Mrs. Fairclough and Lucy, Mr. Frank is likely to be spoiled with over-nursing."

I know not whether she did more good to our patients or to myself. Her presence to Amy was more than medicine. Her sweet voice, her gentle tone and manner, acted on the girl's shattered nerves as a soothing charm; and before the week was out her remaining languor gave way before a drive to Fairclough House.

Frank's sprained ankle was a much more tedious affair than had been prognosticated; and before he was able to reach Tarnbeck his rival was gone. It had been well for him that he was himself invalided, or Amy's pity for Oscar, who in his delirium raved constantly of her, might have changed the destiny of three lives.

It was early in October when Dr. Halgarth first permitted his patient to take possession of a small sitting-room which adjoined his chamber in the west wing and was almost on a level with the library. He was soon able to sit up and walk about the room, and to propose cards and other games as a relief to the tedium of the hours.

One afternoon I was called down stairs to a tenant whose premises had been considerably damaged by high winds the previous night. I left Amy playing chess with Oscar in the sitting-room. She wore a dress of dark blue silk, relieved at the wrists and throat with lace, and as I glanced back I thought she had never looked more lovely.

Perhaps Oscar felt so too. I had barely closed the door, when he, oblivious of the game, laid his wasted hands on hers and looked steadfastly in her face. Possibly the ring on her finger, sparkling as she

moved the pieces, arrested his attention, and was more significant to him than it had been to me.

"Amy," said he, with forced composure, detaining the hand she would have withdrawn, "I have a question to ask you: Did Fairclough speak truth? Have you promised to marry him?"

Amy trembled. A flush rose to her forehead, but she answered unhesitatingly, "Yes."

His brow contracted as if with pain. After a pause he asked, in a low, impressive voice, "Do you *love* him?"

His manner quite precluded evasion. She felt constrained to speak truthfully and openly. "Mr. Bergheim" (she had ceased to call him Oscar) "you should not ask me that. But since you have done so, I will answer you. I love Mr. Fairclough with my whole heart."

"Incredible!" he muttered between his teeth, as if to himself. Then taking her other hand in his to keep her on her seat, for she was rising, he resumed, impassionately: "Amy, that whole heart was mine for years. True, you were then a child; but I had hoped to find it mine still: and mine it shall be, in spite of that mercenary wretch, who seeks not you but your dower."

Amy rose indignantly.

"Nay," he urged, "you know how devotedly I love you; you see to what that mad passion has reduced me. Have you no pity?"

"Oh! Mr. Bergheim, you forget yourself. I gave you my answer in London. It is not honourable to speak to me now in this way. I cannot listen ——"

"Not honourable! Talk of honour to men consumed by love and jealousy!" he hissed. "But if I may not love, I can hate; and my revenge shall touch your lover where he is most sensitive!"

I met Amy flying along the gallery in a passion of tears. Alarmed, I drew her into the library, and after a time succeeded in calming her, and learning the cause of her emotion.

At once I sought Oscar, whom I found in so dangerous a state of excitement that I was compelled to postpone my remonstrance.

Reaction left him so prostrate that he had once more to be carried to bed; and three more days elapsed before Dr. Halgarth permitted him to return to the little sitting-room. After that he seemed to doze away the hours, and want no company.

I had been to Clevedale to inspect the injured premises, and give orders for rebuilding the shattered chimney-stack, repairing the roof, &c., and, on my return, went to the library to put the builder's estimate with other papers.

As I opened the door I thought I heard a rustle, followed by the click of a lock, and a draught of wind upon my face. There was no one in the room; the windows were closed, the cabinet doors open, as I usually kept them. So impressed was I that I even tried the door beyond the cabinet. It was, as usual, locked.

Not convinced, I stirred the fire, which had gone down through

inattention, left the room, relocking the only door I had opened, and hastened along the gallery to Bergheim's apartment. I found him lying in a doze on the sofa, as I had left him two hours before. Inquiry did not solve the mystery, and I was compelled, reluctantly, to ascribe to a freak of the imagination the supposed closing of the door. How my senses could have deceived me was perplexing.

On the following Tuesday, as we sat by the drawing-room fire, with the lamps lit and the amber curtains drawn, Oscar, who had not regained his composure, but followed Amy's movements with moody eyes, announced his intention to leave us. Aunt Lydia put up her hands in surprise. Amy pursued her tatting in silence. I remonstrated, on the ground that he was unfit to travel.

He met my objection with the plea that he should regain vigour neither of mind nor body at Tarnbeck; that the atmosphere of the place was unwholesome to him. His glance sought Amy as he spoke.

What could I say? I was loth to lose my friend, unwilling to let him travel until he was thoroughly restored; but I felt that the man whose passions could so transform him was not the Oscar Bergheim I had clung to; and my heart ached as it acquiesced in his decision that it was best he should go.

I drove him myself to the little station some four miles away, packed him snugly in a first-class carriage, extorted a promise that he would travel by easy stages, and would write when he reached London. But I drove back brooding over his renewed insinuations that Frank Fairclough was mercenary, and only sought Lucy to prop a failing business with her money. I felt that the imputation was false; but for the life of me I could not shake off the fear of the possibilities it engendered.

In less than a week the following letter came to hand:—

"Liverpool, Oct. 19, 186—.

"Dear Charlie,—I have consulted a physician, who advises a sea voyage, change of scene and climate, as my only chance for either brain or heart. The chain which drew me to these shores has been rudely snapped: I sail for Australia this afternoon. When next you hear from me there will be a world between us. A word from Amy might recall me. She will never speak it, and I have a presentiment we shall never meet again in this life. I know I leave an enemy at your elbow; but neither time, distance, detraction—nay, not even *death*—should sever a friendship such as that which has existed between Charles Beckton and his old schoolfellow,

"Oscar Bergheim."

"Thank heaven, the scoundrel has gone without doing more mischief!" exclaimed Frank, glancing from his arm in the sling to the bandaged foot lying on a cushion before him, when I called at the hall to report. "I shall not regret the price I have paid to be so well rid of him, though I am tied by the leg at a most unfortunate

crisis. There are damaging rumours afloat respecting the stability of our firm (whence originating no one knows); but the consequences may be serious, and I ought to be up and doing."

My mind misgave me somehow, as I attempted the defence of Bergheim. I think the remembrance of Oscar's conversation on the way to the station somewhat tempered the warmth of my manner, as I replied: "Frank, I cannot listen to such an epithet as 'scoundrel' applied to my old friend. It is true he made a savage attack on you; but the successful lover should make some allowance for one with an impulsive temperament, whose jealousy at the sudden overthrow of life's hopes overpowered his reason."

Frank had cause for chagrin at his lameness. The report that the firm of Fairclough, Proctor, and Fairclough was "shaky," running through the commercial world, seriously affected its credit and stability; and, had not its available resources been equal to the demand, the old house would have gone. The first use Frank made of his restored power of locomotion was to trace the rumour, if possible, to its fountain-head.

He spent the evening prior to his departure at Tarnbeck. I had discreetly left the lovers to themselves, and was busy poring over "Carey's County Atlas," with "Grose's Antiquities" by my side, when Amy's light tap at the door heralded her entrance. Her flaxen curls contrasted well with her purple dress; and I thought she looked bewitching as she came coaxingly towards me and put her arm round my neck, as was her winning way when she had a request to prefer.

"Charlie, would you mind letting Frank have just a peep at my mother's jewels? I do so want to let him see how I shall look in them."

I pretended to be grave and solemn, and put on my studying cap before I answered:

"Well, well, my love! go back to Frank, and I'll see presently. I'm busy just at this moment."

The business was a fiction. No sooner did the door revolve on its hinges, than I left my books, and turning to the open cabinet, touched the button on the Palmer's sandal. The figure duly turned, exposing the three shelves. I pulled the lowest. Back went the adjoining drawers, and up flew the released lid of the secret Palmer's scrip. My hand went down for the casket.

The casket was gone! Gone too bank-book, securities, and the title-deeds of Amy's property!

I stood aghast, paralysed, incapable of speech or motion. I could not even think.

I have no remembrance of closing the rifled receptacle, or of sitting down; yet I must have done both; for when Amy, impatient of delay, again tapped at the door, I was seated on a chair by the fire, with my head in my hands bowed down to my knees. She tapped

several times before I was roused to consciousness. My own voice, as I bade her come in, startled me. No wonder that Amy, as she beheld my crushed figure and haggard face, stood for a moment in blank alarm, before she rushed towards me with a faint cry.

"Charlie, what is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

She had supplied me with a plea—I *was* ill, and I answered feebly, "Yes."

"Shall I send for Dr. Halgarth?" she asked, anxiously.

"No, no! I shall be better presently. A sudden dizziness seized me, that is all. It will soon pass. Go back to Frank, that is a dear girl, and take no notice."

She obeyed me in part. She went back to Frank (jewels forgotten), but only to communicate her alarm, and bring him and Aunt Lydia to the library. I endeavoured to rally, but in vain. The shock had been too severe and sudden. It must have marked its impress strongly upon me, for, notwithstanding my remonstrance, Jock was despatched in all haste for Dr. Halgarth.

The old doctor could only shake his large head, look wise, talk of some shock to the nervous system, and prescribe doses of medicine.

My malady was as great a mystery to him as the empty Palmer's scrip was a mystery and terror to me. I had no disease, only the shadow of a dark cloud over me. I sat alone more persistently than ever, but I never read; or, if I took a book, my mind wandered from the page to brood over the abstraction of the jewels, the title deeds, and other securities.

It was not the mere loss of so much property that troubled me, although that was considerable. Had it been my own I could have borne its loss like a man. But it was a *trust* confided to me. My sister's dower, which I was bound to produce and surrender on her marriage morning. The nature and values of the several money securities were duly set forth in my father's will; the jewels I had prematurely exhibited; and there was no replacing them by substitution, any more than the old parchments. Then the bare fact of the theft proved that the guarded secret of the Palmer's scrip was known. But to *whom?* Few entered the library save those near and dear to me. Strangers were rarely left alone in it. Never with the cabinet open.

Brooding over the matter brought me no nearer to its solution. I sought our family lawyer and confided in him. His perplexity equalled mine, but he suggested that which I had shrunk from—application to the police. I took the next train to London. When I spoke of the pillage of a secret receptacle, which I could not lay bare, to a detective even, an incredulous smile stole over the official's face, as if there was either a doubt of the tangibility of the property, or of the robbery. Nevertheless, the machinery of Scotland Yard was well oiled and set in motion. Bankers were privately communicated with, pawnbrokers' searched for the missing jewels. As well might we have dredged for them in the Red Sea. I returned home

more dispirited than I went, only to isolate myself as before, and brood over the impenetrable mystery, which daily assumed more formidable proportions.

Amy's wedding was fixed for the fifth of January. December stepped onwards with brisk strides, and the Tower was as blithe with preparations for the trousseau as the master's melancholy would permit. As I sat day by day looking into the fire, until the flames went down, and the red died out disregarded, all that Bergheim had said of Frank's mercenary disposition flashed across my mind and took unfair possession of it.

I had a keen perception of Frank's incredulity—he knowing how religiously the secrets of the cabinet had been preserved from generation to generation. I felt that the odium of the robbery would attach to myself, and I should stand condemned as a treacherous custodian who sought to deprive his half-sister of her lawful inheritance. As residuary legatee the law compelled me to make good all trusts, and this I was willing to do to the utmost of my means. But this would not save my good name. There was no second key to the cabinet; none had the secret of its springs but myself.

One gleam of thankfulness shone through the gloom. For the first time I was thankful that my deep love for Alicia was unspoken, and, as I imagined, unsuspected. I must be content to bury my hopes among my books, and let the name of Beckton die out in my old bachelorhood. Once my library had been peopled with intellectual companions; now I sat solitary. Authors no longer spoke to me through their works. The very skies wept in torrents, as if in pity for my misery. The swollen becks rushed on; the river rose higher and higher, until it encircled the knoll, and Tarnbeck was as isolated as its master. Yet wedding preparations went on merrily downstairs, Alicia and Lucy, who were to be bridesmaids, braving the rough ferry in coming and going, to confer on knotty points of feminine adornment.

There was a servants' ball at Fairclough House on Christmas Eve, to be followed by a family party the next day. All our domestics, except Thomas and Hetty, had gone thither in glorious array for the occasion. Frank had borne off Amy to share the general festivities, after vainly endeavouring to "drag the hermit from his cell," as Amy phrased it.

I had a pleasant fire, closely-drawn curtains, and a well-lighted room. No outward accessory to comfort was wanting, yet I sat there gloomy in the midst of light and warmth, my eyes fixed on the old cabinet, racking my brains how to discover the thief and the missing valuables, tormented by suspicions of those around me, and by the penetration of a stranger into the family arcana.

I had declined supper, and had sat with my head on my hands for hours. The antique Nuremburg clock above the mantelpiece roused me to the flight of time by striking twelve in quick vibrations.

The last wave of sound yet lingered in the air, when a loud pistol-shot, and the whiz of a bullet past my ear, caused me to start from my seat and rush to the curtained window whence came the sound.

No one was there concealed. The glass was uncracked! The bright Christmas moon lit up a wide waste of waters, and the wintry grounds, where no assassin could lurk in concealment. I turned to the other windows with like result.

I examined the cabinet against which the bullet had apparently struck. There was neither mark nor indentation!

Amazed and perplexed beyond measure, I examined the scant household. I found Aunt Lydia toasting her toes on the fender-stool in the cosy parlour, and trying her eyes over the *Leeds Mercury*. Though that apartment so closely adjoined the library, and had the same outlook, she had heard neither shot nor footstep.

"You have been dreaming, Charles. My ears are good, and I have not heard even a leaf rustle in the ivy, all is so still." So said my aunt. But I denied the dreaming.

Downstairs in the kitchen I found Hetty concocting egg-flip for Thomas, who sat with his old limbs stretched out, his pipe in his mouth, the very impersonation of calm enjoyment, by the hot fire, where a great yule-log, lit from last year's brand, was sputtering and blazing cheerily. The cat had made a cushion of Jock's favourite terrier, and both were dozing comfortably on the hearth. It was evident they had heard nothing.

"Shot, measter? I heerd noa shot. And whoa could get anigh Tarnbeck ta fire oather gun or pistol, wi' th' watters owt, an' th' boats a' on this side?"

"Thomas is right," assented Aunt Lydia, who had followed at my heels. "Nothing but a kelpie could approach the Tower through this flood without a boat, and kelpies are not supposed to carry fire-arms. My dear Charles, you sit alone until you grow morbid and fanciful. Who should seek to injure *you?* Besides, no shot could reach you in the middle of a room so elevated."

"But I *heard* it, Aunt, and felt it stir my hair."

"Now, do be sensible, Charles, and don't look so absurdly obstinate. Suppose," she added, "to satisfy yourself, you and Thomas take a survey of the grounds. Hetty and I will go over the house."

There was no one hiding—there was nowhere to hide—the bushes were bare, and the evergreen wall under water for the first time within memory.

A small looking-glass hung by the kitchen dresser, and as I passed through, burthened with a second mystery (for I was unconvinced), I saw reflected within it Thomas, behind my back, tapping his forehead significantly with his forefinger, and nodding towards me, as if to intimate to Hetty that my wits were wandering.

IV.

WITHOUT giving offence I could not absent myself from Fairclough House on that special Christmas Day. But if I was present in body I certainly was absent in mind. Not even the gentle voice of Alicia could restore my old self. I joined in games and dances, but I felt as if I were a marked man.

The glare of lamps, the music, the laughter of children, the very life and motion, distracted me. I crept away into the billiard-room, now deserted, and began to knock the balls about as vacantly as I had taken up the cue. I cannot tell how long I had been playing there alone, when a light step, crossing the tesselated hall, stopped at the door, causing my pulse to quicken and my face to flush. A mist came before my eyes, and I struck my ball unsteadily, as, after a moment's hesitation, Alicia came forward and slightly touched me on the sleeve.

The subdued intonation of her voice, no less than the touch, thrilled through me, as she asked, with real concern in her face:

"Mr. Beckton, why do you desert your friends? Has anything annoyed you?"

"No. But like Dr. Johnson, I am not a gregarious animal. I feel myself out of place in a crowd," was my evasive answer.

"I know you only as a cheerful and intellectual companion," she returned. "To-night you seem gloomy and abstracted. The free comments I have heard respecting your absence have given me pain; therefore I have come to seek you, and carry you back. Unless," she added, after a fluttering pause, "I myself have incurred your displeasure."

"You! Alicia—Miss Proctor! *You* displease me! Good Heavens! If you—I beg your pardon—I am out of sorts. Pray excuse me. I am not fit for company to-night."

"Will Mr. Beckton forgive me if I use the freedom of a sincere friend?" Her delicate hand again fell lightly on my sleeve, and her serene eyes met mine with an eloquent look of entreaty as she continued:

"Your friends fear you are not fit for your own company; that some secret is preying upon you which you are afraid to divulge. And, oh, Mr. Beckton, all the whisperers are *not* friends; there are slanderous suppositions abroad."

I felt that the bolt had fallen before its time, yet I could not speak a word. She went on earnestly: "I myself know you to be the soul of honour and chivalry. If there be a weight on your mind, it is from some outer cause. That you had had a shock I heard from Dr. Halgarth. If you have a painful secret, can you—will you—entrust me with it? It is true I am but a woman, and my counsel may be of little worth, but I have sympathy, and even that may help to chase some clouds from your sky."

Overpowered, I had fallen into my solitary attitude, and buried my face in my hands, leaning with my elbows on the billiard-table. If ever angel spoke to mortal, Alicia was one that night to me. I loosened the fetters on my tongue, and threw the burthen off my soul in confidence to her. Though not at liberty to lay bare the arcana of the cabinet, I told her how mysteriously Amy's dower had disappeared from the thrice-guarded depository—of my inability to trace the thief, or to replace either documents, book, or jewels in their integrity, even if I made monetary restitution, which I was preparing to do through the medium of a mortgage on a portion of the Tarnbeck estate.

Alicia followed my narration with marked and sympathetic attention, only interrupting with an exclamation of surprise, or a question here and there. But when, in answer to her natural query, "Why did you not at once make the theft known?" I told of my hesitation lest I myself should be branded with their abstraction, and Frank Fairclough should reject the hand of my darling sister, she drew herself up in noble defence of our friend.

"What grounds have you for suspecting Mr. Frank of such baseness? He could not possibly doubt your integrity, notwithstanding the mystery of the case, and he is too upright and honourable to break off his engagement to your sister, even had there been a leaven of Mammon in his choice, which there is not. Some one must have poisoned your mind against him."

In fealty to my boyhood's friend I said nothing of Oscar's insinuations, but, deferring to Alicia's unbiased judgment, resolved to throw myself upon Frank's generosity on the morrow. Engrossed in the subject, neither of us had heard how often Time had flapped his wings, nor yet the closing of the door, which some one, conceiving ours a tender interview, must have shut quietly.

The inference was natural but mistaken. No word of love had been spoken; yet when Amy tripped in with the sportive exclamation, "What are you two arch conspirators plotting, whilst a disconsolate sire is wailing his missing daughter?" both started and blushed with self-conciousness; and we left the billiard-room to take our places in "Sir Roger de Coverley," sensible of a new link between us, with hearts that beat in unison, and hands that thrilled to each other's touch.

Mr. Proctor went back to Leeds by the first morning train, and Frank drove Alicia over to Tarnbeck in the afternoon to remain with Amy until the marriage.

After dinner I bore Frank off to the library, and, though not without considerable nervous hesitation, laid the whole facts before him. He listened most attentively, and questioned minutely, but I could see that from first to last no doubt of my integrity crossed his mind, and he was cooler than I had expected.

"It was a stupid trick of your governor to consign so much

valuable property to the keeping of a private cabinet, however well guarded by secret springs. Woodwork is proof neither against fire nor crowbars, and might well tempt burglars." After a pause for cogitation he resumed: "You say you are bound by oath not to disclose the secrets of the escritoire. Should you feel equally bound to prohibit my unassisted examination. Some one must have penetrated it, and why not I?"

I gave my assent willingly, and thereupon Frank began to pull and push the carvings wherever a prominence caught his eye. He made one or two unimportant discoveries, but the insignificant little button escaped detection. Still he persevered. Suddenly a bright thought struck him, and he sat down in the chair opposite to me.

"Beckton, were you ever a somnambulist?"

I saw the drift of his conjecture, and answered readily, "Not to my knowledge."

"Nor any of your family?"

"Nor any of the family."

"Well, this is altogether unaccountable. Depend upon it, some one else has had access to this room, with ample leisure to try the cabinet, as I mean to do before I give it up." He rose as he spoke, and turned again to his task, over which he had spent two hours, just as the clock was on the stroke of midnight.

As it struck, a cry burst from my lips. Oscar Bergheim stood by his side at the cabinet, with a pale face, and a red spot on his broad shirt-front. At my cry Frank turned round.

"What ails you, Beckton? You look as scared as if you saw a spectre!"

"Oscar," I cried, rising with outstretched hand. "Oscar, my dear friend!"

There was no response. The figure passed to the unused door and was gone, the door remaining closed. I saw Frank watching me in amazement. No doubt I looked bewildered.

"Frank, did you not see Oscar Bergheim standing there?"

His eyes followed my pointing finger.

"Oscar Bergheim? Nonsense! He is in Australia by this time. I saw nothing and no one."

I shook my head. "But *I* did!"

"My good fellow, the fact is you have brooded over this unfortunate theft until your brain is teeming with morbid fancies. You had better go to bed and get a good night's rest. And make your mind easy. I want Amy herself—neither her jewels nor her money. Her real property will not run away, and there is little fear of a claimant coming forward whilst bricks and mortar hold together. And now I must be off; there will be black looks when I get home, for keeping the servants up so late—or, rather, early."

Frank came again in the evening, after the mill was closed and dinner over; and, dismissing the groom, announced his intention to

remain the night, as he said, for the pleasure of a long chat, but as I suspected, in reality to watch me.

Under the pretext of a headache, which music increased, I stole away to my retreat soon after his arrival. After a long gossip with the ladies he came to the library as if to say "good night." But he lingered; again sounded the dumb cabinet—the Palmer never opened his scrip. But precisely at twelve Oscar Bergheim stood there again, with the red spot on his breast, to disappear as before, unseen by my companion.

This time my terror was palpable. Perspiration gathered on my brow, and a tremor shook every limb. I feared some accident had befallen the friend of my youth. Frank laid his cool fingers on my pulse in evident perturbation, sought Aunt Lydia for a sedative to still my nerves, and would not leave me until he saw me in bed and asleep.

I found him with Alicia and Aunt Lydia in full conclave the next morning. The conversation broke off abruptly on my entrance, and after ordinary salutations we sat down to breakfast.

It was not until afterwards that I ascertained that Frank and Aunt Lydia had exchanged mutual confidences respecting my declarations —the alleged shot on Christmas Eve, Oscar Bergheim's appearance on the 26th and 27th, and, finally, the missing treasure. The two came to the conclusion that study had turned my brain, and that even the loss of the dower was a delusion. Only Alicia maintained a belief in my sanity.

That night Alicia claimed my assistance in a troublesome translation. How every fibre quivered as she sat by my side at the table, and occasionally our fingers met as we turned over the leaves! Amy came dancing in and out, until an arrival below found her more agreeable occupation, and we were left in quiet—quiet so profound that I heard our hearts keep time with the ticking clock. Still we plodded through the book; but I have no remembrance what we translated. All at once—I know not and care not how—in turning a leaf my hand closed upon hers. I flung my arm round her, and strained her to me with a passionate clasp, only to release her instantly, and sob, rather than say, "Heaven forgive me, Alicia; I could not help it. I love you more than my life."

"And I love you, Charles," was the quiet, unexpected answer, which, at the same moment, stilled my nerves and set my heart aflame. All my prudent calculations, all dread of the paternal Proctor, vanished as I held her in my arms unrebuked, and laid my kisses on her brow and lips.

In the unlooked-for excitement Alicia lost sight of the purpose with which she had come to the library (I need scarcely say the translation was a fiction). The striking clock broke in upon our dream of bliss. Simultaneously we turned expectant.

The cabinet doors flew open, and there stood the semi-transparent

figure of Oscar Bergheim in his summer suit of grey tweed, with his finger on the button of the Palmer's Scrip. Then he glided to the door, looking back, as if inviting us to follow. For a moment he lingered, a yearning look in his eyes.

"Let us follow," whispered Alicia, clinging to me. It was evident the apparition was visible to her also. She had more nerve than I. Lifting a small reading-lamp, she advanced, still holding fast my arm. I had to open the door through which the figure had passed. It was standing in the archway of the west wing as if awaiting us. It moved onwards towards Oscar Bergheim's chamber, the door of which stood open. We followed in silence, the palpitation of our hearts being audible in the stillness. Our lamp barely dispelled the gloom around us, yet Oscar's form stood clearly outlined as it stopped at the wide fireplace (closed and fitted with a modern stove) and laid one hand on the central medallion richly carved in wood above it, the other over the red spot on his breast.

Ere we could advance another step Oscar's semblance was gone, and with it a sense of light and companionship, however dread.

As if by mutual agreement, yet without a word, we hurried together from the west wing along the dim corridor and staircase to the lighted drawing-room below.

Aunt Lydia was nodding on one side the fire; Frank, lounging on an amber satin settee, with Amy on a low stool by his side, was toying with her silken ringlets.

The light of another world must have lingered on our faces, the pair started up so appalled. Aunt Lydia was aroused. Alicia was the first to tell what we had both seen. Frank looked incredulous, but there was no more thought of my insanity. Alicia, at least, was not a dreamer.

Poor Amy's teeth chattered with fright. Frank threw his protecting arm around her, and, remembering she had been kindly kept in ignorance, told her, with all the brevity of a business man, of the mysterious events which had made my life miserable. Long before he had concluded she left Frank's arm, to put both hers round my neck, and lay her bright head on my breast, reiterating the words, "Charlie, Charlie! as if I cared so much for money or trinkets!"

Alicia suggested that there must be some connection between the apparition and the missing valuables, and proposed that an instant search should be made in Oscar's chamber. All agreed to the general proposition, but Amy and Aunt Lydia demurred to its immediate attempt. "Why not leave it until daylight?" they both cried in a breath.

"I think the sooner your brother's mind is relieved the better," put in the thoughtful Alicia, and I thanked her with a pressure of the hand which no one saw.

"I think so too," assented Frank, with decision, but Amy, who had

gone back to her lover, looked up beseechingly in his face, and he wavered. We had been standing grouped around the fire. Aunt Lydia resumed her seat, and one by one the rest sat down also. There was no thought of going to bed. Amy would not hear of Frank leaving us.

The fire was replenished, the lamps retrimmed. Jock, who was sitting up to ferry Mr. Frank and his horse over, was sent to his repose. In a body we made a raid upon the larder for refreshment, even Alicia not caring to visit the dark and unknown regions alone. Frank and I brought wine from the dining-room, and we prepared to wait for the slow daylight, in a sort of shuddering, anxious expectancy, somewhat allayed on my part by the new happiness I had found in Alicia's love. We sat next to each other, and I think my arm stole along the back of her chair. Once I caught a surprised glance from Frank's eye, followed by a merry twinkle, and a demure expansion of his closed lips, as if well satisfied.

Conversation was carried on in whispers, and when general was of a weird and ghostly character.

With morning came courage, which baths and breakfast strengthened. What the domestics thought of our sitting up I did not inquire.

About ten o'clock we went together to Oscar Bergheim's room. The light streamed in through the Gothic windows, and fell on the bed where he had tossed so wildly in his delirium. Frank was for raising the stones of the hearth. Alicia would try the medallion where the shadowy hand had rested. For some time it baffled our efforts, but at length the whole panel slid downwards, and there, in a deep recess, lay Amy's dower—casket, bank-book, parchments, etc.

Who shall tell the deep thankfulness of my heart at that moment? What had I not recovered besides! An avalanche seemed to slip from my life and leave me sound and free. I could now look up to Alicia unimpoverished, unsuspected. I was too happy to do more than wonder what had befallen Oscar, and why he had been permitted to return for my behoof.

Amy's wedding was an event in Clevedale annals. The vicar officiated and Mr. Smiles assisted. The bridal dress, of white silk and lace, looped here and there with orange-blossoms and jessamine, was the gift of Lady Clevedale, who herself shone graciously upon the occasion, and the wondrous loveliness of the bride was the theme of all the strangers present.

But the revelation made after the breakfast, when I resigned my trust and surrendered Amy's dower, furnished a topic of after conversation for miles around.

When I had given Amy a parting kiss, and wrung the hand of Frank, as he stepped beaming into the carriage which bore them to the station, I invited the awful Mr. Proctor into the library. When we left I was accepted as his son-in-law.

The bridal tour was over; the young couple were fairly installed in one of Amy's own houses, four miles up the dale, which old Mr. Fairclough had furnished for them handsomely; Hetty and Aunt Lydia were turning the Tarnbeck Penates upside down in anticipation of another wedding, when the mail from Australia brought the following letter with its enclosure.

"Melbourne, December 26, 186—.

"Sir,—It is with pain I convey to you the melancholy tidings of our passenger Mr. Bergheim's death, the more so that he died by his own hand. His manner throughout the whole voyage had been peculiar—at times hilarious, at others moody. Yesterday (Christmas Day) we sighted Melbourne at mid-day. The sun was glaring hot, and its rays pouring down melted the pitch on the steamer's sides. Mr. Bergheim paced the deck with his head uncovered. I warned him of the risk of sunstroke; a passenger remonstrated with him, but he only laughed. In about an hour he went down to his cabin. An hour and a half later (precisely 2.30 p.m.) the sharp report of a pistol-shot rang through the vessel. Your friend Mr. Bergheim had shot himself through the heart. The enclosed lay on the desk before him. As we were almost in port, the remains were carried ashore for interment. His papers supplied your address.

"I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

"James Stevens, Commander of S.S. 'Naiad.'"

If I read this with emotion, supernaturally prepared as I had been, how much more was I moved by the terrible enclosure!

"Steamship 'Naiad.'

"My Dear Charles,—I dare not call you friend; you will reject the title when you know all. Yet I must unburthen my conscience before I go mad outright. Charles, you know how much I loved your sister, even from her infancy. Not until my father's death was I free to marry. Then I sought Tarnbeck. Amy was in London. Without a word to you, I followed. I found ready entrance into Lady Clevedale's circle. Amy had grown into a lovely woman—lovelier than my dreams; but she did not recognise me. I followed her everywhere, but my attentions annoyed her. I avowed my love, and she rejected me—gently, but firmly. Still I did not despair, until Fairclough came between us. I saw her smile on him, and it maddened me. Wheresoever she went, there was he as her shield—quiet, unobtrusive—but there. And, looking back, I know that he, loving her well, was justified. I had disgraced my father's name, and Fairclough knew it. I was going headlong to the deuce, and he knew that too. I was not worthy to marry your pure sister, and he knew that, and told me so to my face. Baffled, but not despairing, I presented myself at Tarnbeck when Fairclough's business should have kept him away. Fool that I was, I thought that I had your sanction, and so set up a claim to her.

He came between us again at that accursed picnic; and, in my unspeakable agony, I struck him. You know what followed. To me there was a blank, and then the torment of the lost Amy's gentleness led me to tempt my fate again. Good heavens! it was only to hear her avowal of love for Fairclough! Then the demon of jealousy fired my soul with revenge. Charles, do not wholly hate and despise me. During the last vacation I spent at Tarnbeck I sat alone in one of the library windows. The heavy curtains hid me. Your father entered. He unlocked the cabinet; I watched him touch a spring and pull a shelf, and saw the result. The shelf and figure went back to their places. When he left the room, the cabinet door stood open. I stole from my lurking-place and tried the spring, and I had mastered the Beckton secret. You will have missed all that your father left there for Amy. I took them—I, your trusted friend. Not for their value—they were useless to me—but for revenge. I was mad. I thought that Fairclough would abandon a portionless girl, and leave me a future chance. He may have done so—I know not. I had not taken them an hour, but I was stung with remorse, and remorse fought with revenge. I was a thief. I parleyed with my conscience, and, quitting the Tower, left the things behind me, where no Fairclough can ever find them. My torment was not over. If I hugged myself with revenge at first, I have suffered tortures since. Not till we were fairly at sea did the consequences of my act to you, my more than brother, dawn upon me. Oh, that I could undo the past. It cannot be. I have blighted all I loved. I can only atone with my own blood. There is a world between us as I write—there will be another world between us when you read.——Farewell—forgive me if you can.

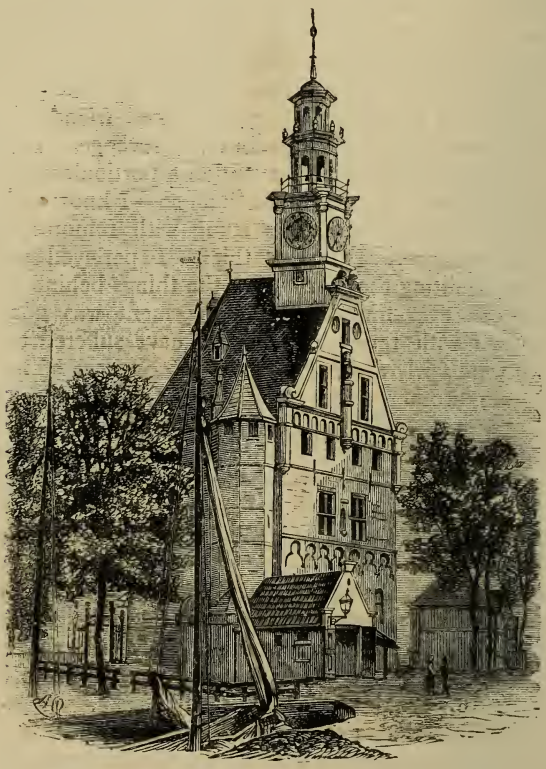
"You will find the accursed things hidden behind —— My — I cannot—Fairclough would——"

Jealousy and revenge had clearly overpowered remorse. A red splash was the only signature to the incomplete letter. But the fatal shot had carried its message instantaneously to me, though a world lay between us; and who knows but repentance came even as the spirit fled, and hence the apparition we had seen.

We kept all knowledge of Bergheim's fate from Amy. She would never have worn her jewels without pain had she known what they had cost. But I showed the letters to Alicia and Frank. It was not until then that he told me he had traced the false reports, which had shaken their firm, to my friend Oscar. He had been only silent lest he should grieve me. And I did grieve. But when my dear Alicia came to rule at Tarnbeck, we closed Oscar's room with all its memories, though we never saw his remorseful spirit again after Amy's dower was recovered.

THROUGH HOLLAND.

THE neighbourhood of the Dead Cities—Monnickendam and Marken—had so far raised A.'s curiosity and interest, that when I spoke aloud my intention of visiting another of the Dead Cities—Hoorn—he put up palette and pencils on the spot, and de-



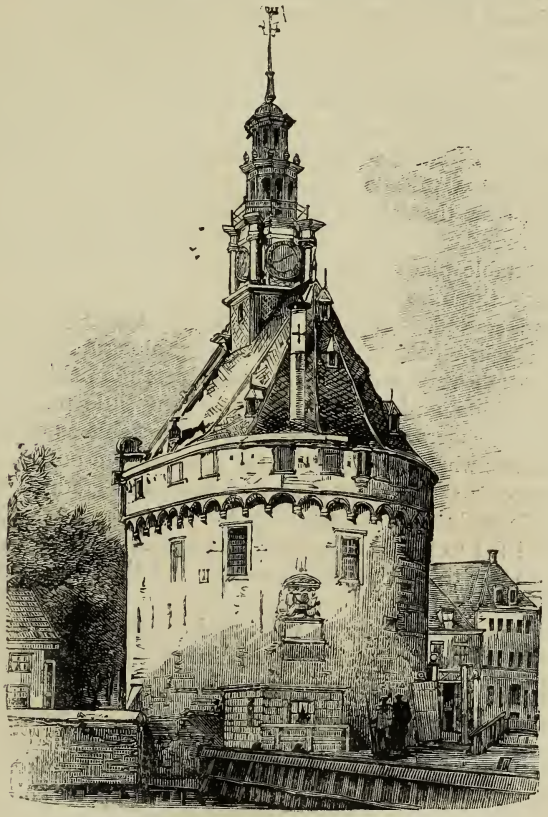
HOOFD TOOREN (FRONT VIEW).

clared that he would not miss the excursion for anything in the world.

We started early one morning by canal, in the steamer for Purmerende, and accomplished the journey after the usual experiences of such travelling in Holland. The surrounding dykes and green pastures, cattle and stunted trees, windmills and red-roofed houses, flatness of landscape, and canals frequently elevated above the earth's level: features that all combine to give this country at once a certain richness of colouring, a monotonous sameness; and yet, from con-

stant repetition, a distinct and peculiar characteristic of its own, separating and detaching it from one's experiences and impressions of other countries.

A goodly number of passengers were on board the boat when it started from Amsterdam; some evidently on pleasurable thoughts intent, but the larger number as unmistakably there for business purposes. The steamer called at several small places on its way; a



HOOFD TOOREN (SIDE FACING SEA).

few people went ashore, and others embarked; laughter and words passed between the captain and his friends on land; and away the boat steamed again. An hour and a half of such quiet kind of progress, and Purmerende was our reward. Here we landed: the boat had to be exchanged for a diligence. But the diligence was not ready to start, and we all entered a café to await its arrival.

The room was large and tolerably full of people, and I began to wonder as to the dimensions of the diligence and the number of horses it would need if we were all bent on the same road. Some

called for bread and cheese, which was brought to them in the orthodox slices of wafer-like substance, suggestive of no flavour but that of the steel which cut them. This was in some instances accompanied by curaçoa, and in others by the small beer of the inn, that an Englishman would drink only when beer is a sine quâ non of his existence—as potatoes to an Irishman, or caviare to a Russian. And yet in some places the Dutch beer is excellent.

As the bread and cheese disappeared, so, to one's relief, did many of the passengers. By ones and twos they paid their reckoning and departed; until at last we counted in all less than a dozen. Then up clattered a lumbering machine, with a hood like a Quaker's bonnet, though, alas, wanting the pretty face beneath it, the demure grace and dignity of a "Friend" of the softer sex. The interior consisted of a back seat, a middle seat, and a front seat; and ten people managed to stow themselves away on the three benches. A. and I fortunately found ourselves on the back seat, facing the horses; the most comfortable places in the vehicle; but at best a stiff, cramped position for a three hours' drive.

Away we started. Not precisely at the speed of a good old-fashioned English coach-and-four galloping along a hard, level road, yet fast enough very soon to leave Purmerende behind us, and all signs of such life and activity as that funny little place displayed. Our fellow-passengers made themselves as agreeable as circumstances permitted: but what can atone for the agonies of a position in which you can scarcely stir hand or foot, and feel as if gradual ossification of the whole body were taking place? The sweetest music in the world would fail to thrill the nerves of a victim upon the rack. All we could do was to make the best of it: and this, by at least one of us, was done valiantly.

The surrounding country was flat and marshy, and yet had been made the most of in an agricultural point of view. Here and there we passed large storks bending gracefully over the banks of a dyke, or winging their slow, majestic flight through the air. But they were few and far between. Most of the wise birds had migrated to a more genial temperature. One swallow does not make a summer, but one stork in Holland is a very sure sign of approaching winter.

Our road was long, straight, and monotonous, occasionally bordered by the trees indigenous to the country. We passed now and again a farmhouse, to which a large tract of land seemed attached. These houses were painted various colours, blue predominating. So, likewise, many of the trees near the houses were adorned half way up the trunk with the same celestial hue; and, unless I was much mistaken, not a few of the cows we passed had their horns similarly decorated. It became a serious problem whether the inhabitants of this neighbourhood were not themselves afflicted with that popular malady known as the blues, and felt it incumbent to bestow a like tinge upon their surroundings. Much might be forgiven to a people

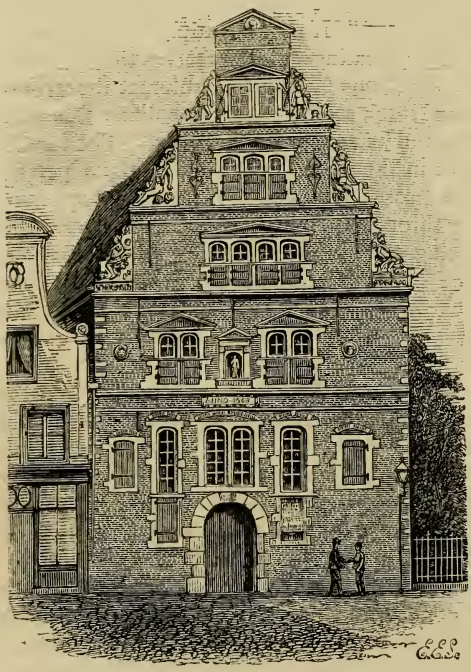
who, to live here at all, ought to possess almost the faculty of amphibiousness. It is impossible to conceive an existence more dreary and mournful than that spent in one of these farmhouses, through the sad autumn evenings, the long winter nights, and the early days of spring. There is no more melancholy hour of the day or year than the chilly twilight of an autumn evening, when something akin to death seems to creep with subtle mystery over the face of nature; and the sorrow and sadness that lies in most human hearts, either active or latent, seems to find its response in earth and sky. Here surely, if anywhere, the people might be pardoned for indulging somewhat unduly in "the luxury of grief." If they so indulged. But nature ever carries compensation in her dealings, and preserves the "balance of power" by bestowing largely of one faculty to counteract the evils of another withheld. Thus the Dutch seemed to me peculiarly free from all tendencies to melancholy and its accompanying evils. The land of vapours finds no counterpart in the minds and moods of its people. A large proportion of them possess a certain phlegmatic disposition which carries them serenely through their uneventful existence. The milking of cows, the reaping of corn, the pressing of cheeses and churning of butter, become to such temperaments an all-sufficient employment to redeem each day from monotony. The more intelligent and better classes were as lively and quick-moving as are to be found in any country.

An hour and a half's drive, and the diligence stopped at what might be called a half-way house, at the foot of a bridge and in the midst of a small village of which the name has now escaped me. Here everyone alighted, thankful for ten minutes' grace in which to recover the use of their limbs, if recovery were possible. It was evidently so to most of the passengers, and with the first return to liberty they rushed to the bar and clamoured for beer and curaçoa; not a mixture of the two be it understood, but each man to his own peculiar beverage. A. was no virtuous exception to the rule. He had not yet learned that in travelling the less these strong drinks are indulged in the better. The brain retains more clearness; the body is less susceptible to fatigue: the risk of being poisoned by unwholesome wines is avoided. It is edifying to feel yourself independent of strong drinks and all such outward and visible aid to the mental and physical temperature. On the other hand, it would be difficult to conceive a more depressing influence than to live for ever amidst a people who indulge in nothing stronger than the cup that cheers but not inebriates.

This, at any rate, had not to be complained of in the present instance. The passengers re-entered the diligence with more liveliness than they had hitherto displayed. Even A., who had looked on the gloomy side of things as he occupied his corner, now seemed to think the hardships of the conveyance somewhat less unendurable than the treadmill. Thus with chattering and laughter amongst these

somewhat rough but well-disposed companions, time passed, and distance was conquered, and Hoorn came in at the end.

At a first glance this former capital of North Holland, this now dead city, looked ancient beyond any we had yet seen. Of the Dead Cities it is one of the most curious. Everything about it indicates a long-passed age and history. The houses are all old and quaint in form, some of them most remarkable. One of the first to strike us was a house bearing the image of Mary Queen of Scots and Darnley, with an inscription concerning their passage through the town. Many of the houses are decorated with sculpture of all sorts and descriptions of subjects, some of them excessively well executed.

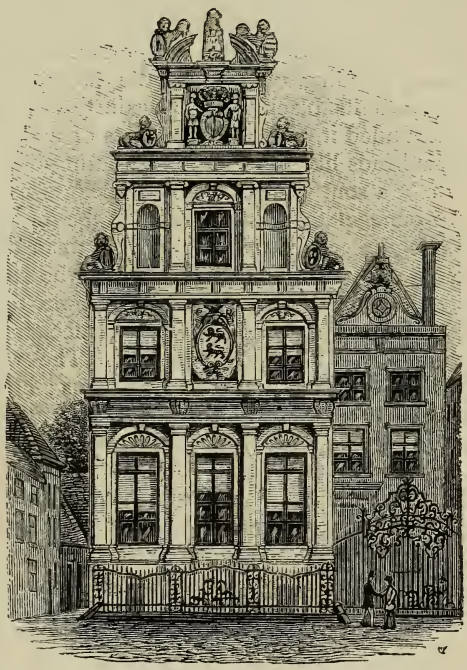


ARSENAL, HOORN.

Our first object was to secure resting room at the hotel—the Doelen—the only decent one this dead city can boast of. The landlord proved civil and obliging, anxious to do all in his power, but speaking little beyond his own native Dutch. The hotel had recently been done up and enlarged, and a strong smell of fresh paint made itself more conspicuous than was altogether agreeable. The place, on the other hand, was wonderfully clean. Table d'hôte was still going on, and as we had not broken our fast since early morning, we profited by the occasion. The dinner was primitive and required all one's moral resources to bear cheerfully. It is, however, worse than folly not to make the best of things in travelling; not to put up with roughness and discomfort, as evils that must now and then be encountered—in a dead city: clouds in the social sky to bring out more forcibly by contrast the beauty of the blue and the sunlight. Is there not somewhere a proverb which says "a hungry stomach cannot listen to reason:" was ever proverb more astray? Without enumerating the various dishes, suffice it to state that the ruling feature of each was a tendency to be extremely undercooked. The good people of Hoorn must be cannibals in this respect. So, after the soup, came

a filet de bœuf which had scarcely seen the fire, and which had to be sent away to be decently grilled: followed by a chicken which it almost seemed they had omitted to expose to the fire at all.

But these discomforts were treated with philosophy, and, dinner at an end, we sallied forth to reconnoitre the town. Like other dead cities of the Zuyder Zee, Hoorn is deserted in aspect. You pass through street after street and scarcely meet a creature, quadruped or biped. The houses, amidst this Pompeian silence, seem untenanted though not uncared for. They are clean, in good preservation, warm and cheerful in tone. Yellow seemed the prominent colour, with the inevitable red roofs. The houses in many instances were gabled, and frequently presented an outline of steps towards the summit. Some of the ancient gateways have disappeared, but quite enough may still be found to satisfy a lover of antiquity. The shops were small and unpretending; though, no doubt, sufficient to supply the wants of the inhabitants. In one or two that we entered purchases were impossible because the good man behind the counter was only "keeping shop" whilst the owner had gone out. Old curiosity shops were at a discount — a rare thing in Holland. All we picked up in this respect were one or two watches, centuries old, at an antediluvian watchmaker's, which we carried off as prizes. One of these was a watch in a double case, with a very curious dial. The upper half of the dial marks the hours, the day beginning at six and ending at six. A black hand does duty for the day, a white hand for night. A long hand goes round the clock for the minutes. In the centre of the dial, at six in the morning the sun begins to rise, goes round, and sets at six in the evening, when the moon and the stars make their appearance. At the bottom of the dial the date of the month shows itself.



Tribunal, Hoorn.

Visitors rarely trouble Hoorn, and we were consequently marked

men. As evening drew on we wandered down to the banks of the Zuyder Zee. Nothing could be more desolate than this aspect. Here we were quite away from the town. A few poverty-stricken cottages dragged out a melancholy existence in the background. The banks were rugged and low. A long stretch of flat ground, bare and desolate, bordering the sea, could be traced by the eye. The water was calm and listless; melancholy; as if it knew that it washed the shores of a dead past. To our left hand the state prison reared its head; one of the best kept, best organised prisons in Europe. The sentinels, with muskets shouldered, were keeping guard and patrolling backwards and forwards, though there was small chance of escape from those walls for the poor wretches they enclosed. To our right hand, standing out on a little promontory, an inevitable windmill sketched its black outline against the darkening sky. A few huts surrounded it, and the thin masts of a cluster of fishing-boats crested their heads like the trees of a youthful forest.

Not a soul was anywhere visible. For about an hour we stood on the same spot, looking in turn to the four points of the compass. Not a sound reached our ears; not a human being came within view, save those distant, melancholy sentinels, who seemed to walk with noiseless tread within their boundaries. It was a most depressing influence. Even the sky seemed to take the infection, for clouds rose up in black masses and rain began to fall. The water plashed drearily; the wind whistled in the trees behind us; here and there far out on the water we could trace the outline of a small vessel; and yet further off a long line of black smoke, the trail of a steamer probably bound for Amsterdam.

So we turned backwards from all this desolation into the town. More quaint and weird-looking than ever were the outlines of the houses in the dark night; more suggestive of antiquity. We were not sorry to reach the inn, and rouse our flagging spirits by that homely but time-honoured institution, a dish of tea.

Here, as in many parts of Holland, tea, not coffee, is the staple beverage. But when the tea-things were put on the table they somewhat astonished us, and carried us back to the days of Dr. Johnson. Small white cups without handles, scarce larger than eggshells, did duty for the more substantial vessels we are accustomed to in England. The tea-pot corresponded in size. The whole equipage would have served to furnish a large doll's house. A hissing urn was placed upon the table, and happily the water boiled. That boiling water brought *home* before our mental vision almost as keenly as the reception of a letter in some well-loved handwriting brings it. Small rolls of bread and tiny pats of exquisite butter accompanied this satire upon an English tea-table. But luckily we could return again and again to the charge, and when the cups had been refilled some score of times we began to think a halt advisable, unless we had a fancy for a sleepless night. How much the fact of having emptied

the urn, and downright shame at asking for more water, influenced our reason, I will not declare.

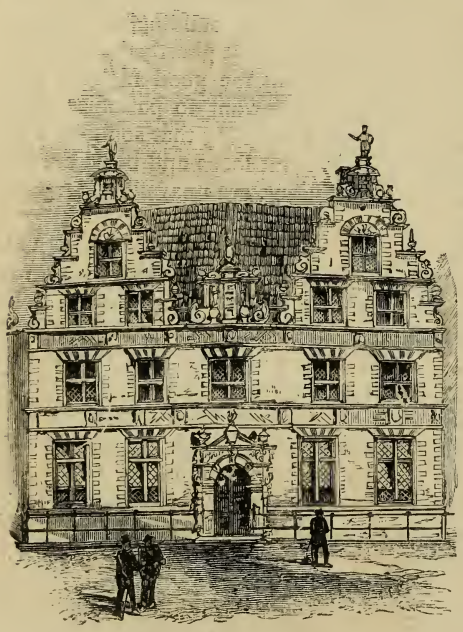
The landlord had given us two small rooms at the end of a long passage; doubtless the best his house afforded, and as clean as fresh paint and scrubbing and new furniture could make them. It was rather a weird old building, suggestive of ghosts and apparitions; and I felt a thrill, and almost a cold hand laid upon my heart, as our footsteps echoed through the long corridors. The flickering candles made shadows upon the walls, which might have been cast by an unseen spiritual host about to become visible to mortal eye. As I entered my room at the very extremity of the building, far removed from the inmates of the hotel, I wondered what ghostly dreams would disturb my rest. I heard A., after wishing me good night in tones more tremulous than his double bass was wont to patronise, trebly lock his door and mutter to himself something that sounded like a spell wherewith to exorcise evil spirits. But locks and bolts, the most substantial walls, and all human precautions, are unavailing safeguards against ghosts.

I had a lurking hope that a ghost *would* visit me that night, and I took good care to leave my door unfastened in order that no obstruction might be offered to a possible entrance. Ghosts are sensitive and easily offended. I have never seen a ghost; never even heard one; I much wish to do so. Should these words fall beneath the eye of any reader who can inform me how or where this wish may be accomplished, I shall be for ever grateful; and will take any trouble or any journey to satisfy this said ambition. I have heard a great many authentic ghost stories; and lately of one that would make each particular hair stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine; I could point to friends who have seen the most alarming and astonishing and altogether supernatural sights; but nothing of the kind, I reluctantly confess, has ever honoured me with a visit. My nearest approach to a ghost has been, when burning the midnight oil, and the brain has grown somewhat aweary, a large phantom cat, invariably black (suggestive hue!), has sprung across the room and warned me that much study is a weariness to the flesh, and that it is folly to spend the small hours of the night, that were given for rest, in dissipating the intellect.

That night, in the old inn at Hoorn; a dead city with a dead past; the very place one would imagine to throng with the ghosts of Dutchmen centuries dead; I grieve to say nothing at all supernatural fell to my lot. My slumbers were long and unbroken, until an hour when all ghosts and ghostly sensations have disappeared. I awoke with the sun streaming in at the window, and bidding me rise for a sluggard. All very well, Mr. Sun, but your life and ours are very different. Yours is a calm and even course, never deviating a hair's breadth, never hurrying an instant; no wear and tear to your nervous system; no phantom cats or ghostly apparitions to warn you that all

is not as it should be; we mortals have all this to encounter, and small wonder if at times we are less punctual than you in our rising.

I drew aside the curtains and looked out at the window. The canal was running beneath, washing the base of the hotel; a bridge spanned the road. The town was only just beginning to awake. The houses, old and quaint, seemed themselves to have been sleeping for a century, a link between past and present. There was very little of the modern anywhere visible: of what use to build new houses in a dead city? It is people, not habitations, that are wanted over there.



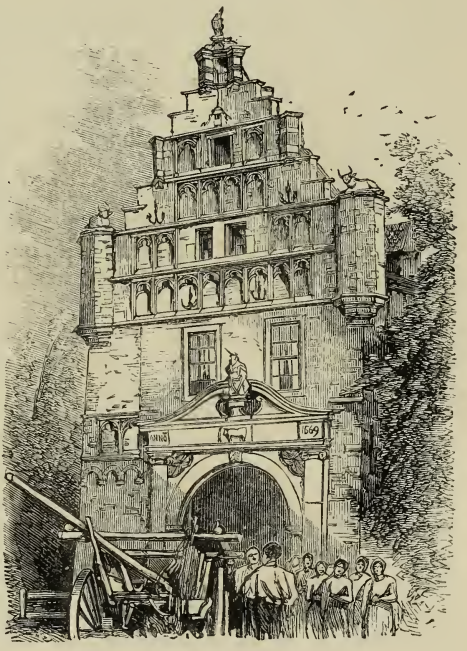
TOWN-HALL, HOORN.

Can you realise such a state of things, oh ye who live in the crowded, pent-up courts and by-lanes of London, a whole family in each corner of the room and a lodger taken in in the middle? No, you cry; and very truly. Imagination has its bounds.

As I looked out on the quaint old scene a woman came up on the back of a mule evidently laden with things for the market. So no doubt it was to be market day. But, as a rule, the market people come in in carts; the quaintest, most nondescript, most picturesque vehicles that ever were seen; all colours, and shapes, and sizes; things we dream not of in England. Then shutters were swung back, and blinds undrawn, and a lady in a very light and airy costume appeared at a window, and stared at me in the calmest, most collected, but most amazed manner. Next, in suppressed excitement, she turned to some one in the room, and a second lady, in equally fragile attire, made her appearance, and stared across in the same cool but astonished fashion. A stranger in the place: a Canaanite in the land: what could it mean? A short but interesting consultation, full of energy and gestures, ensued; and in due time and completed toilette one of the ladies issued forth and entered the inn, evidently bent on sounding the landlord and gleaning all possible information concerning the mystery. Perhaps they, too, had thoughts on apparitions intent. But this trifling episode revealed one little domestic item I had of course not had any

opportunity of otherwise learning—everyone is not so favoured as Mr. Pickwick when he visits an inn—and that was, that the Dutch ladies, in Hoorn at least, wear nightcaps.

Sounds in a far distant part of the house gradually made themselves heard, and by-and-by we found our way down into the breakfast-room. The table was decorated with six or eight little equipages, such as had surprised us the night before by their lilliputian dimensions. Every tray was for tea, and everyone took tea. Coffee seemed to be unknown. We were not even asked which we would prefer. It seemed to be taken for granted that we had no choice in the matter. In truth we had not. The tea is always good in Holland; the coffee often indifferently bad. It is possible to drink weak tea, but it is not possible to drink bad coffee.



KOEPOORT (COWGATE), HOORN.

There was a boat starting that day at twelve o'clock, and we made up our minds to take it, and enjoy a passage across the Zuyder Zee, rather than endure a second time the discomforts of the diligence. A. felt his powers of endurance on such occasions limited. He wanted that Spartan-like nature which takes all things as they come, and makes one thankful for all mercies, small and great, when travelling abroad. So that a man returns safe and sound, all perils braved, all dangers, seen and unseen, averted, he has no right—nay, it is ingratitude to Him who has us in His keeping—to be ruffled by small tempests or slight inconveniences. They, indeed—as we have already said, but it cannot be said too often—form one of the pleasures of travelling, by striking the balance of light and shade.

Our frugal breakfast over, we wandered out into the town, inspected all its wonderful old houses, a few of which are given in illustration, and gradually found our way down to the port. This seemed to be the most bustling part of Hoorn—for there is still a certain amount of life and trade going on in the old place. It deals largely in the curing of herrings, an art first discovered in Holland.

Shipbuilding to some extent is also carried on. It was here that Schouten was born, who in 1616 doubled the point of South America, and called it Cape Horn. The discoverer of Tasmania and New Zealand was also born here. It trades largely in cheeses. So many were stacked up ready for home use and exportation that it was difficult to believe so large a stock could be collected. Floor after floor in various warehouses was piled up with these round red cannon balls; whilst the odours issuing from the windowless apertures were enough to subdue for ever the most firmly-rooted love for the article. On the ground-floor of some of the buildings we watched with interest the process of cleansing and adorning. A cheese, black and dirty, would be placed on a pivot, and, rapidly turned, would be subjected to the paring process of a scraping knife. Gradually blackness and dirt gave way to the clean red rind beneath; the cheese would be pitched amongst its brethren, and another would take up the process.

As we watched with interest, so we were in turn watched—a quid pro quo to which we could not take objection. Not a soul, man, woman, or child, landsman or seaman, but stopped to inspect us most thoroughly; and if two were together, their remarks and criticisms were made freely and openly. We took them whence they came, in as friendly a spirit as they seemed to be advanced. But with all their curiosity there was nothing rude or irritating in their manner of staring. Rather was it amusing.

Gradually wending our way to the port, we stood before the Hoofd Tooren, the wonderful old tower at the commencement of the pier, and walked around it as a venerable relic of the past. Then we passed through the little gateway and went on to the little pier itself. A. sat down, took out his book and began to sketch the old building. Beside us, boats were moored, that, perhaps, had been fishing out at sea all night. The little harbour was full of them. In the tanks on deck large quantities of fish were swimming about. A few of the tanks seemed devoted to shrimps. A woman came down with a basket, struck a bargain, and went away with a goodly supply of fish. Their fate, at any rate, was sealed. The sailors, in their heavy boots and wide knickerbockers, came crowding around us, and watched A. with wonder as his work gradually assumed proportions, and a fac-simile of the old round tower appeared on the paper. Surely here was a magician; and they grinned, and chattered, and marvelled, and seemed withal delighted that so rare a genius should visit their shores. Immediately to our right hand stood the clean-looking, well-built prison, with its sentinels performing their never-ending patrol.

Suddenly there was a stir amongst the soldiery. The great iron gates were swung back, and two ladies in fashionable attire were saluted by the guard as they passed through into the town. They seemed quite out of place in this antiquated sea-port, in ruffs and feathers that might have done duty in Regent Street or the Champs

Elysées: out o keeping with their surroundings: pictures in a wrong frame: pearls in a wrong setting. The gates were swung to again, and locked with great keys that rattled with a sense of omen and a ring of power: and the ladies passed out of sight.

I strolled on to the bridge, and found a man on the steps busy shrimping with a net, and a strange kind of square box that floated on the water and held the fish, alive yet prisoners, in their native element: a contrivance I had never seen elsewhere. The sentinels peered at me through the bars, grim and gaunt; and at last, after due inspection, and evidently making up their minds that I was on the right side of those frowning walls, their features relaxed into the shadow of a smile, and saluting me they recommenced their monotonous and mournful duty.

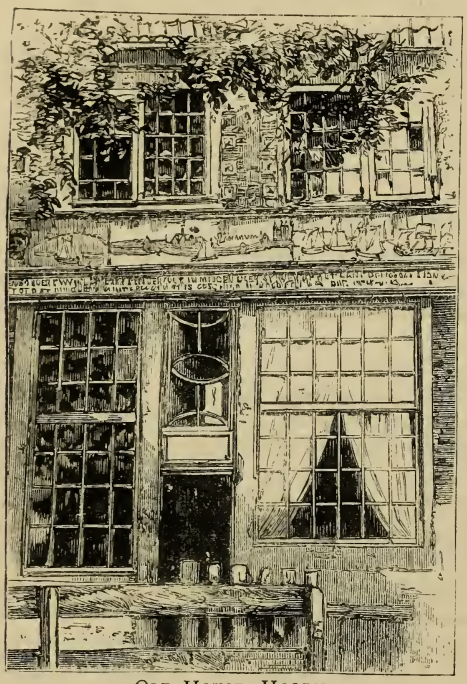
When I returned to A. his work was almost done. The little crowd of sailors had dispersed, with the exception of two intelligent young men of about twenty, who had unconsciously put themselves into a picturesque attitude for being sketched, with their caps, and thick brown woollen shirts, and wide breeches. A few more strokes and the thing was complete. Pencils were put up, the book was closed, the two sailors wished us a friendly good-bye, and away we went.

Very little leisure was left on our hands. The boat started at twelve, and eleven o'clock had struck some time ago. We made our way to the quay. The boat was getting up steam; a few passengers were on board, and we took our places amongst them. The steamer, happily, was clean and decent, and for once we were spared the infliction of cattle. A boat had started that morning at six o'clock, and taken its load of quadrupeds. Twelve o'clock struck, and before the last knell had ceased to vibrate on the air, the captain gave the signal to depart. The whistle shrieked, the bell rang, ropes were slackened, and with some little difficulty we threaded our way out of the harbour. At the end of the pier, the two young sailors, who had evidently been watching for us, waved their hats as a "God-speed" to our journey. It was a token of their goodwill and friendly feeling towards foreigners; a trifling but pleasant incident; proving that in all states of life, and in the most obscure, out-of-the-way places, you find the same evidence of a common brotherhood in men; that one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.

The Zuyder Zee is subject to furious tempests; hurricanes that render its surface agitated and boisterous in the highest degree. During these storms, which are sometimes of long duration, navigation is suspended; little boats seek a harbour of refuge; the sea is left to spend its fury upon itself. The flat, dull coast around offers little opposition; its shores echo with the beat of the waves, and the spray will dash itself far upwards; the little Island of Marken is frequently swamped; and everything has to await fairer weather. After a time the cloud lifts, the sun breaks forth, the waters subside;

the sea, passion-worn, sobs itself to rest. Away the boats again put forth, and the poor fish get caught and eaten.

To-day we had no experience of this sort. Clouds and sunshine, certainly; now one, now the other. But the water was calm and tranquil, and nothing could have been more agreeable than this voyage across the little sea. As we receded from Hoorn, nothing could look more picturesque than the quaint old place: its small harbour and pier, its curious houses, its ancient round tower gradually diminishing to the sight. The prison, a large, square, modern building, stood out in violent contrast with its antiquated surroundings. The shore to the left, the windmill on the little promontory we had noted the night before, all looked desolate and dreary to the last extent. It was ex-hilarating to feel oneself on the free, if not boundless sea. In the distance, as we journeyed, we saw the turrets of Edam and Vollendam, now one dead city, now another. By and-by, we passed Marken, though not very near, and felt quite a friendly glow towards the place and people, as we traced the outlines of the huts and the church. More than ever from our standpoint it looked like an emerald in a setting of silver. I wondered how they were getting on with their differences, and whether the good old brotherly feeling was once more established amongst them. This too passed out of sight; and by-and-by we turned the corner, entered the canal, and found ourselves locked in the fine gates that keep in the waters of the basin of the Y. There was the inn with the clever old landlady, who had hired us her "Victoria" the day we had visited Brock and Monnickendam and Marken, and so coolly pocketed the note at the end of the journey. And there ahead of us was Amsterdam, with its leaning houses, and quaint streets, and canals that did not run with eau-de-cologne; its domes and church towers and perpetual chimes.



Old House, Hoorn.

We were soon through the lock, and across the basin, and once

more treading the streets of the capital. By this time we had grown at home in the old place; familiar with streets and turnings, and even faces, which began quite to inspire in us a certain affection. After each successive wandering it felt more and more almost like a coming home. Our footsteps had but to echo in the doorway, and the waiters would hasten out to know how we had fared, and the landlord would condescend to show his portly figure and welcome us back to his hospitable abode.

To-day we were just in time for the table d'hôte. As we entered our rooms to discard our travel stains, the old alchemist, as we chose to think him, looked over with a surprised stare. He had thought, no doubt, that his inquisitive neighbours had at last departed. And lo, here they had turned up again. With a friendly nod, notwithstanding, he turned to his work, and bent over his fire, and continued his search after the philosopher's stone. We, on baser thoughts intent, soon found our way into the dining-room.

So ended our second experience of this quaint and curious, worn-out, and old-world portion of Holland—a dead city of the Zuyder Zee. CHARLES W. WOOD.

NO MORE SEA.

THERE shall be no more sea: no wild winds bringing
Their stormy tidings to the rocky strand,
With its scant grasses, and pale sea-flowers springing
From out the barren sand.

No angry wave, from cliff and cavern hoary,
To hearts that tremble at its mournful lore;
Bearing on shattered sail and spar the story
Of one who comes no more—

The loved and lost, whose steps no more may wander
Where wild gorse sheds its blooms of living gold,
Nor slake his thirst where mountain rills meander
Along the heathy wold.

Never again through flowery dingles wending,
In the hushed stillness of the sacred morn,
By shady woodpaths, where tall poppies, bending,
Redden the ripening corn.

Neath whispering leaves his rosy children gather
In the grey hamlet's simple place of graves,
Round the low tomb where sleeps his white-haired father,
Far from the noise of waves.

There shall be no more sea! No surges sweeping
O'er love and youth, and childhood's sunny hair:
Naught of decay and change, nor voice of weeping
Ruffle the fragrant air

Of that fair land within whose pearly portal
The golden light falls soft on fount and tree;
Vexed by no tempest, stretch those shores immortal,
Where there is no more sea. J. I. L.

A NIGHT INVASION.

I.

IT was on a chilly day in October, and my mother had just started for Deane, where lived my married sister Esther.

It was a case of another baby. The summons had come at six o'clock in the morning; and after the pallid discomfort of an early breakfast, and the bustle of packing up and packing off our dear good little mother, we began to feel rather unhinged and weary, with a long day yet to dispose of on our hands. By eleven o'clock we had resolved ourselves, for the third time that morning, into a committee for calculating, from premises based on sand, the exact moment when we might hope to hear—to quote the time-honoured joke—whether we were "aunts or uncles."

To digest these ruminations, I strayed out without my hat to the little orchard on the slope, for the weather, until to-day, had been mild, and we had not given up our summer habits. The apples had not all been gathered in, and I amused myself by picking up those that had fallen in the night, waging war as I did so with the wasps that had been before me in the field.

Great masses of cloud were lifting their crests to the north-west, and the wind had begun to rise. There was still some blue sky visible, but it was deeper in colour than belongs by right to an October sky.

After studying the weather signs, with my apples gathered in my dress, I re-entered the house almost in a hurry; and there was Margery lifting up her voice in the tones of trouble, and wiping her eyes with her apron, while Helen and Lucy sat listening to her.

They were in the dining-room, Lucy seated on the table with her feet on a chair, and my sister in a more decorous attitude.

"It's jest as if it came on purpose," Margery was saying, "for me to be leavin' you the minute my missis's back is turned! And I would not do it neither, if Ruth was to be trusted—but she isn't; and the old 'ooman may go between our hands if she hasn't a bit of comfort. So, with your leave, Miss Murray, I'll get the dinner as soon as may be and be off."

"Yes, certainly," said my sister, "and we will see to the clearing of dinner ourselves, Margery; we would not wish you to delay farther."

"Well, thank you kindly. Put the things anywhere, young ladies, and I'd better send up little Sally, as I pass; she'll see after you a bit, and answer the door if anyone comes. I'll be back by ten o'clock, if walking hard will bring me, and you'll know my knock from anyone else's at the back door, and not be frightened."

Margery's mother, the old 'ooman alluded to, had fallen down and broken her arm. She had come into the dining-room to announce her plans rather than to ask for our permission, and the trouble of leaving us alone evidently disturbed her more than the cause for it. It seemed a breach of the confidence my mother reposed in her, and we were still little more than nurslings in her eyes.

We lived at that time at the Hermitage; a small, lonely house that had the recommendation to our slender and reduced resources of a modest rent. And Margery would have been so offended at being supposed to require another "hand" that it became quite out of the question to think of proposing it.

Lucy Lennox was our cousin, living with us occasionally. She was very pretty: and so was Helen, in a secondary degree, more than balanced in my eyes by a strong background of good sense, for which Lucy was not remarkable. As to myself, they generally said I had the brains of the family. Margery departed, and Lucy and I undertook the task of putting away the dinner things, making Helen sit still.

The wind had risen considerably, and howled wildly about the house. I and Helen got out some plain sewing; but Lucy sat at her ornamental tape work. Sally did not come. We supposed she was unable to, and took it philosophically.

Our tongues went as fast as our needles at first, and when or why it was our spirits first began to flag it would be difficult to say. I think the weather must have been partly to blame. Short, stormy showers of rain swept at intervals against the windows, and the wind had risen to a perfect hurricane; whole boughs from the orchard were borne along by the eddying current; the more exposed trees bent to the wind. On the lawn, a graceful, sleek-looking fir-tree, of which we were all fond, after sundry warning heaves of the ground about it, that reminded one of the struggles of a sinking ship at sea, tore up its roots with one convulsive effort, and fell prostrate before our eyes. It really was quite depressing, in spite of the excitement of the thing: especially when a slate or two began to slide from the roof.

Tea. But not a very cheerful party sitting down to it. The meal could not be prolonged for ever, and the evening drew on. It seemed a long time yet before Margery would come.

Lucy sat on a stool near the fire, sighing at intervals. I made endless mistakes in my knitting, and was bothered over the picking up. Helen read aloud to us; but as the wind roared in the chimney, and round the house, she lost her place so often, and read with so many pauses, that the book was put up. An unwise move: for to sit listening to the wind beginning afar off, gathering strength, and coming nearer, nearer, nearer, to the final burst against our fortress, was to challenge nervous depression.

One such blast, louder and stormier than any before, had just

broken its force, making us all shiver, when suddenly, acting on our nerves like an electric shock, there sounded through the house a very violent peal of the door bell.

"Oh, good gracious!" cried Lucy, covering her face with her hands, "I know we shall all be murdered!" An irrelevant remark that made me begin to laugh rather hysterically.

"Oh, pray don't laugh, Grizel," said Helen. "What on earth are we to do?"

"Perhaps it was the wind," said Lucy hopefully, it being very much the nature of wind to pull out a rather tight door-bell and give it a ring.

"Let us wait and see if it rings again," I suggested, and ring again it did, louder and more impatiently than before. Margery, with anything short of wolves in pursuit of her, would never have given such a peal. But she would go to the other door. It was the *loudness* that so startled us.

"Now don't be absurd," cried Helen, addressing nobody in particular. "How I wish the door had a chain, or that there were a window."

Unfortunately the hall door had all the end of the house to itself; not a lattice was there through which to hold parley. The door, too, was secured with strong bolts; and these safeguards must be withdrawn ere yet the enemy was revealed at close quarters. Another prolonged and startling ring.

"I will go and open it, for one," said I, feeling like Horatius at the bridge, but with a mixture of cowardice and despair in my valour to which we will hope he was a stranger. "Who will come with me?"

"I," said Helen. "Could we speak through the door do you think?"

"Not a chance of it, with this wind."

"Oh, but I cannot stay here all alone; I should die," said Lucy. "Let us keep together, whatever happens. And, oh Helen, please be careful of the candle!"

Running through the passage together, I undid the first bolt; paused, and listened. Then the second. Then the third. The door burst inwards, taking all our strength to support its impetus.

A light flared in our faces from without, an eddy of leaves made good its entrance; and, in the doorway, helped onwards by the wind stood, to all appearance, Mephistopheles himself!

Yes, truly.

If piercing black eyes, gleaming out from a pale face adorned with pointed moustache, a tall mysterious figure shrouded by a cloak, and what appeared a supernatural indifference to the elements, might be allowed to stand as representing Mephistopheles, he was even now here amongst us.

Lucy gave a suppressed shriek and clutched tightly at my dress. It was impossible in the hurly-burly of surroundings to understand a word.

We were blown back in the passage, and the stranger in turn was blown across the threshold after us: which was so far fortunate in that Helen's candle, in spite of precautions, had at once gone out, and the light carried by him was our only refuge from total eclipse.

Mephistopheles proceeded deliberately to shut the door again, shutting himself of course in with us; a ghastly proceeding that made Lucy give out the following clever suggestion:

"Oh, tell him we are only ladies in the house; tell him he must go away!"

I saw him cast a rapid glance on her; evidence that he had heard the speech; but he addressed himself to Helen. She maintained her ground as forewoman of our little group.

"I am distressed to intrude myself thus on a household of ladies, but I seek for help in urgent necessity. Our carriage has met with an accident just outside your gate, and we ask for shelter for an invalid lady, who is with us, until we see how far the damage can be repaired so that we may proceed on our way."

He carried in his hand a veritable carriage-lamp, and not a Satanic torch. If we could but consult our mother what to do! or even Margery! Until that impossible end was achieved, it seemed hopeless to form any opinion as to the right course to pursue. Helen gathered her scared wits, and answered the stranger with as much decision as if the case were of every-day occurrence.

"We will certainly give the lady shelter, and any others of your party that need it. It is a dreadful night for travellers. I hope no one has been injured?"

"No one, I thank you. A large tree has been blown down across the road—the horses could not proceed, and became restive. There is no man here, then, who can render us assistance?"

"Not one."

"Then I go, and will return shortly with the invalid. Ten thousand apologies, ladies, for disturbing the sanctity of your house. Your proverb says 'Necessity knows no law,' and when one is overturned at a gate one must needs discover if it be a friendly one. Accept my deepest gratitude and thanks"—making a profound bow.

He spoke English fluently, but with a strong French accent; and was evidently a foreigner. It was of no use calling Lucy to order in her present excited state. At the low bow she burst out laughing with as little ceremony as she had previously screamed. Mephistopheles, however, did not linger longer, but disappeared into the confusion outside, carriage-lamp in hand.

"Oh, I know they are a gang," said Lucy hysterically. "You will never let them in again!"

"Nonsense," said Helen, a little sharply, under the weight of the responsibility she had taken on herself. "Of course we must admit a lady if she comes. Let us look to the fires; and do, some one, light the lamp in the hall."

We spent a few moments busily, and then stood waiting for the arrival. It did not come as soon as we expected; minutes began to mount; we looked at each other and felt puzzled.

Then came a ring at the bell, rather quieter than before. Mephistopheles again: greeting us this time with the smile of an old acquaintance, and displaying a very white row of teeth under his dark moustache. But alas! what shape cannot his Satanic Majesty assume?

Walking behind him with very slow steps came a tall middle-aged man, who supported on his arm a lady in deep widow's weeds. Even with that assistance her mode of progress was little beyond a creeping pace, which he seemed to guide and encourage in undertones by every possible means. No wonder they had kept us waiting. This new arrival attempted no manner of greeting, but looking up at Helen as he advanced, said, in a quick, concentrated tone:

"Is there a sofa I can take her to?"

"Yes. Please come this way."

In the drawing-room he divested the lady of her bonnet and the large cloak, probably his own, in which she was enveloped, and put her to lie down with her feet upon the sofa. She allowed him to do so, but immediately started half-upright, flinging her arms about in wild despair.

"Oh, I know it will come back, come back! I feel it coming, and we shall all be lost."

"No, it is not coming back; it has gone quite away; it can never come again. You must lie here for just a little while and rest, and I will sit by you. You are quite safe now."

He took from somewhere a small bottle and measuring glass, and made her drink something from it. After touching it with her lips she thrust it from her impatiently and buried her face in the pillows.

"Don't give it me; I want to die," she cried out vehemently, with hard, dry sobs between. There was grave anxiety on the gentleman's face, but he persevered.

"You will take this now, and presently you will feel wonderfully better. We will all rest quite quietly when you have taken it."

The lady lifted her head up wearily and took it like a child, just as he liked to give it her, without opening her eyes.

Helen, with what seemed to me marvellous forethought, had armed herself for the invalid's arrival with a bottle of spirits of sal volatile, and she held it now towards the stranger with an interrogative look. He took it eagerly, with a grateful glance, and bathed the lady's brow with it.

"Shall I get something warm for her feet and take her boots off?" whispered Helen.

"By all means, and as soon as you can. It would be better to have fewer in the room. I must not thank you now," with a meaning look towards the invalid.

I blush to say we had all crowded together a little behind the sofa. Lucy clung to my arm as we moved away.

"Is she dying?" she sobbed in a frightened whisper.

"I hope not," said the Frenchman reassuringly; "it is a hysteric fit that will pass soon, I trust. But she is very far from well."

I heard no more, for at that moment came the joyful sound of Margery's knock, and I flew to let her in. She arrived in utter bewilderment, having seen strange men and lights about the stables: nor did she approve of our desperate act of hospitality. "You ought not to have let anyone come in, young ladies, with me and your mamma away." So ran the burden of her rebuke.

I cannot do justice to Helen's presence of mind; it filled me with admiration and humility. She seemed to think of, and do, all that was needed by the lady. She lay quite still now, under Helen's soothing ministrations, whether sleeping or not I could not judge. She was past her first youth; her face, which was handsome, was much worn by fatigue, sorrow, or illness; possibly all three. Presently the stranger rose from his post of observation and beckoned us to where the light stood on a distant table. He had a very fine head, with large features and a remarkably keen eye. Although he was slightly bald and his hair quite grey, he was evidently only in middle life.

"She is asleep now," he said. "I trust she will be fit to travel by the time the carriage is ready."

"She is most welcome to stay here as long as is necessary for her," said Helen, with the promptitude that had quite deserted me. "I am only sorry that my mother, Mrs. Murray, is away."

"Thank you, thank you," he said warmly. "We owe you the deepest gratitude for all your kindness and help. I can but assure you of our gratitude now, and I have but my bare word to give that we are at least respectable inmates of your house, which I am quite ashamed of invading in this unheard-of way. My name is Hudson—Dr. Hudson of Croome, where I practise, being a doctor by profession. This lady, my sister, has been recently left a widow under distressing circumstances in France, and we are on our way back from thence, travelling by slow stages to suit her state of health. The gentleman is M. Adolphe, her brother-in-law, who will, I know, add his own thanks to mine for your kindness to us and our poor invalid."

It was impossible to resist the earnest manner in which he spoke, and it served to reassure us. But even this did not quite prepare me for the next turn of the wheel of Fate. The blacksmith, found and called in by the coachman, had examined the carriage, and found the repairs could not be concluded till next day.

"Pray do not be annoyed, Dr. Hudson," said Helen valiantly: for he was looking very much so. "Surely, in any case, this poor lady would have been unfit to travel. The room for her shall be prepared at once."

"I, of course," said Dr. Hudson, "shall require no bed. I must sit up to-night—it would not do for me to leave Madame Adolphe; and for her brother-in-law, if you will allow him to rest on this sofa it will be quite sufficient for him. For my sister I will most gratefully accept your offer of a bed, although I am very truly vexed to give such trouble."

"We will gladly make any arrangements this small house admits of," said Helen.

With that we left the room. Our resources were indeed not large—the "blue room," as we called it, being our only bonâ fide spare room.

"We can easily do up Lucy's for M. Adolphe," said Helen. "I should be sorry not to come to the rescue with another room for them, poor things."

As Lucy was away half the year, her room had something of the sanctity of a spare one about it, and there was our mother's vacant, which she could use. Margery was very cross at all this; so Helen and I worked vigorously at what there was to do; and indeed there was no time to lose.

Of course the fire smoked in Madame Adolphe's room, and the wind sobbed fitfully in it. It seemed a long time coming to what I call a good temper, and sheets had to be aired, and bedclothes unearthed, and only the domestic gods know what besides. Where could Lucy be that she did not offer to help? Perhaps keeping awe-struck guard over that formidable Mephistopheles. Imagine my surprise when, through the open dining-room door, came a hearty laugh from Lucy, a good deal too highly pitched for the vicinity of an invalid.

"Oh, no, you make a mistake again," she was saying; "it is my Aunt Judith I stay with at St. Leonards, and the dear aunt here is Aunt Bessie."

Heavens, how silly the child was! Were our family chronicles being aired for this stranger's benefit?

They were seated on each side of the fire, the Frenchman with a look of peculiar amusement. He rose on my entrance, and proceeded to declare that the storm had done them an especial kindness in bringing them to such good quarters.

"Oh, don't be too sure," said Lucy, lightly, and without a particle of misgiving as to the propriety of her behaviour. "We may give you damp sheets for aught you know!"

"What on earth were you talking about when I came in?" I asked her as he left the room. "Were you giving this man our family history complete?"

"No, not quite that, Grizel. He kept thinking we were sisters, so I had to tell him we were not, and that I lived in turns with you and Aunt Judith."

"But does it matter what he thinks?—a stranger like that."

"He is a M. Adolphe. He and the other gentleman showed their cards, and ——"

"Yes, yes, I know all that. But it does not follow from their showing cards that they are the people described; there is no actual proof." I said this for the moral of the thing, not that I had the least misgiving myself that they were impostors.

"Oh!" said Lucy, and it is beyond my power to give all the significance of one of those exclamations of hers, as a look of blank dismay came into her face. "I'm afraid I talked to him quite freely. I'm afraid I said your mamma would not be back yet."

That night seemed as long as a week. Putting my own merits aside, there is no doubt Helen would have made a perfect "lady help;" and Margery, even when in high dudgeon, was a born worker. When all was in readiness, we were only at the beginning of another act. To get Madame Adolphe away from the sofa, and up stairs, and into bed, was a work of time and patience. But it was accomplished. At last the house was shut up and quiet; and then for the first time our nerves gave way wholly.

Who were these people we had in the house with us? Was the illness a pretence? Were they one and all impostors? Even Helen, well as she had played her part hitherto, gave way now to uneasiness and apprehension, and our minds dwelt less on entertaining angels unawares than on a very opposite picture. Margery stood to it that they were "burglars."

Tired as we were, our strength held up for one more task. With noiseless steps we crossed the passages and bore in Helen's mattresses and bedclothes to our mother's room, while Lucy and I shared her large bed. Whatever happened we would at least keep together.

Upon comparing notes afterwards, it appeared that each of us resolved to stay awake and keep a vigil over the safety of the house. But Nature decreed otherwise; and in spite of storm and strangers Mephistopheles and burglars, we were all asleep in half an hour.

II.

Daylight. Morning. Somehow it reassured us, and we met our guests as friends.

Madame Adolphe had passed a fairly good night. But on Dr. Hudson's face, as he sat at our pretty breakfast table, which Margery had been pleased to spread hospitably, there sat much anxiety. It was a face one trusted instinctively. Lucy's spirits were light again. As if *they* could be heavy long!

"Just fancy," she exclaimed, laying down her knife and fork; "this time yesterday we had not so much as heard each other's names, and now, here we are, breakfasting together just like old friends; and Aunt Bessie with no notion of it all the time!"

Dr. Hudson looked up to scan the speaker's face. She was ex-

tremely pretty, with large liquid blue eyes like real transparencies, and she was gay and light as a summer's day.

"I say again," said M. Adolphe, "I should not mind being out in a storm every night of my life, if it led to such results as these."

"Oh, but," said Lucy, "you don't consider what it was for us. Just when we were as frightened as we could be with the wind and loneliness, to hear the door bell ring in that dreadful manner. You should have seen us trying to make up our minds whether to open the door or not. But Helen said it had to be done. And then—to see a great black man before us!"

"Lucy!" reproved Helen. But the rest laughed: and the Frenchman, unabashed by this picture of himself, turned to his brother-in-law.

"One must hope one is not as black as one is painted on some occasions!"

"Oh, I did not mean black in that sense, you know," said Lucy, as she went on buttering her toast.

"I feel, to my chagrin," resumed M. Adolphe, "that if my chances of admittance had rested with you, Miss Lucy, they would have been but small"

"Very small indeed," she answered frankly. "I wanted Helen to bang the door to again."

"Ah!—I heard somebody say 'Send him away;' which was very cold-hearted of somebody. But you do not, I hope, keep up that feeling still?"

"Oh, no. Now that we have all got acquainted you can stay as long as you like. It is often very dull here."

A judicious speech. Helen frowned, and so did I. The Frenchman was evidently greatly amused, but I feared he might consider her silly. He had dark, piercing eyes, good features, and curly hair, dark as his moustache. Many people would have thought him handsome. My insular prejudices could not quite endorse that opinion. A shade too much gloss, too much complexion, too much hair—a degree too much jewellery—a general impression that he wore evening dress of a morning (which he didn't)—these were what I fought against. Yet I must, in justice, say he was a gentlemanlike man, very much so for a Frenchman.

Helen and I did the housekeeping alternate months, and it was under my administration these events arose. I found plenty to do that morning. And the invalid's requirements were a little out of Margery's beat, so I took them upon myself.

Helen, meanwhile, had the charge of Madame Adolphe, who made great exertions this morning to be in readiness for the start after luncheon, and showed as much gratitude as her companions for what we had done.

Her story was indeed a sad one. Not six months ago she had ost a beautiful boy of two years, quite suddenly, from croup; then

followed the illness and death of her husband, close upon which her second child was born, who only survived his birth for a few weeks. Health, spirits, nerves, were completely prostrated by these repeated blows, and now her brother had brought her to England, to see what native air and familiar scenes would effect. He appeared to watch her anxiously in a covert kind of way—and spent part of the morning writing at Helen's davenport.

M. Adolphe, on the contrary, bestowed his society largely on Lucy and me (when I could be with them), keeping up a flow of conversation that never flagged. One specimen of which I must be allowed to chronicle.

After one of my culinary rambles, I returned, to find him saying, "I assure you it is a fact. The housemaids there wash the doorsteps in eau de Cologne."

Having mastered that ancient joke at ten years of age, I laughed. Lucy spoke—a look of misgiving on her face: "Then all I can say is, it is great waste."

The Frenchman glanced triumphantly at me, and went on.

"I do not agree with you. It would, to my mind, be greater waste to send for the water of another place. At Cologne, why not use the water of Cologne?"

"But still—oh, stop. Oh! I see it now! it is a catch. *Eau de Cologne!*"

Lucy was delighted as any child. Apparently M. Adolphe was the same. Possibly he did not rate feminine intellect very high, but his conversation was filled copiously with anecdotes and catches of this calibre. He seemed thoroughly in his element, and could have gone on, I believe, for a week.

Luncheon was over and we were back in the drawing-room. Madame Adolphe, primed and fortified in every possible way, had come down in readiness for the expected carriage. She talked a good deal now to all of us, and seemed taken with Lucy's sympathy and attentions.

Helen had given me an uneasy whisper just before this: "I don't quite like her looks, Grizel. Whenever Dr. Hudson's back is turned she seems excited and perturbed: and she wanted to do ever so much more than I would let her."

I watched her now as she sat, half reclining, and listening with a smile to Lucy's talk; she looked beguiled out of care into a calmer mental region.

M. Adolphe resumed an argument he had begun with Lucy that morning on the comparative merits of France and England. I am bound to say it was Lucy who brought the luckless subject up. Dr. Hudson sat fidgeting with a paper-knife and compressing his lips. I glanced at Madame Adolphe; her face had changed a little.

"Now, I appeal to you," said that incorrigible Lucy, turning to her, "for you have tried both, Madame Adolphe. Don't you agree with me that England is the only place to live in, after all?"

Dr. Hudson had risen hastily, with a counter remark intended to drown Lucy's; but the mischief was done. The invalid was sitting straight up with an agitated face.

"No, I must speak," she said, thrusting Dr. Hudson aside; "it is right for me to speak, it is necessary for them to know. They must understand clearly that it is France that is the country of my love—my happiness—the country of my dead. Oh, in mercy, let me go back to them and die too! It was cruel to take me away and make me leave them; cruel, cruel, cruel!"

Into violent hysterics went she, much, much worse than on the preceeding night; flinging herself about wildly, alternating her sobs with fits of laughter that made one chilly to hear. A covert excitement had been working in her all the morning, and now the last touch was given to it.

We were all dismayed. To this hour I have but a confused idea of how at last she was carried back to her room and got to bed. The time sped away while we tried restoratives, sedatives, and what not. One thing soon became evident: it was useless attempting to take her farther to-night; she was far too ill for it even to be thought of.

M. Adolphe decided to go with the carriage to the town of Haisley, two miles off, and come up in the morning to see what plans could then be made. I had just come downstairs in earnest talk with Dr. Hudson, when M. Adolphe, with a face of much concern, met us.

"You must come and effect another cure," he said. "Here is a young lady who will break her heart unless you comfort her."

True enough. Lucy leant on a chair in bitter tears, the very picture of remorseful grief: which increased at the sight of Dr. Hudson. It was one of her great attractions: that she was so natural, so unshackled by self-consciousness. If I had been betrayed into crying, I should, at least, have flown to solitude to combat there my grief, but here she sat, with great pearls of tears rolling down her cheeks, gazing up at these two men with the expression of a child; and her clear eyes had the faculty of shedding tears without looking any the worse for them.

"Please, please forgive me!" she implored. "I know I have nearly killed her, and it breaks my heart. I never thought what I was doing. But don't be angry with me more than you can help. I saw how vexed with me you were, and I deserved it; but oh, do, please, forgive me now."

"Yes, yes," said Dr. Hudson, after vainly reiterating that she was quite forgiven. "We know the heart was not to blame, only this young head," laying his hand quite tenderly on Lucy's golden hair. "Taught by the wiser heart, it will find out in time what we all have to learn—that in this weary world much thought for others is necessary if we would be helpful men and women as we journey on our way. Seek that wisdom, Miss Lucy, the sooner, the better; it adds to the worth even of the brightest Queen of Beauty."

"Tut, tut—I do not know about that," interrupted M. Adolphe. "If this head is to lose any of its graces in the acquisition we shall think the wisdom hardly bought."

Altogether Lucy ended in being rather the heroine of the day.

III.

It certainly must be best that the future is a sealed book to us. How otherwise would Helen's and my united courage have been equal to opening our door to strangers on that stormy night? For so it turned out that for three weeks, in consequence of that rash act, we had Madame Adolphe as a permanent inmate, and the gentlemen occasionally. The former could not be moved; the latter stayed at the hotel at Haisley.

My sister Esther and her baby made but slow progress, so my mother could not leave her post; but Aunt Judith came over to do temporary dragon for us, although it *did* seem rather late in the day for us to arm ourselves with a safeguard. Aunt Judith certainly was the mildest and least suspicious of dragons, and stood a good deal in awe of Dr. Hudson, in talking to whom she dropped her stitches in knitting at a furious rate.

She had lapses of alarm, too, lest M. Adolphe's profession of Protestantism should be only assumed, although what great harm would accrue to us if he turned out to be a Mussulman, I failed to see.

She was very tender and kind to us, and devoted to Lucy, her adopted child, in whom she could see no flaw. And one day our mother managed to come over unexpectedly, to see the stranger for herself. The two gentlemen arrived nearly at the same time that day: and she made up her mind quickly that both were good, trustworthy men; a creed never swerved from afterwards. They, with Madame Adolphe, one and all, seemed to lose their hearts to our dear good little mother. And we felt we were placed on a new and pleasanter footing with our guests.

"Don't say anything about intruders," said my mother, looking like a rock of strength to lean on mentally and morally, as she sat by the invalid's bed with the doctor. "I hope our doors will always be open to wayfarers in distress. It was the storm brought you here, and we know Who sent the storm, so say nothing about obligation; we are but doing a pleasant duty in keeping you here."

What happy three weeks they turned out, after all! An atmosphere of company in the house is pleasant, giving excuse for an unlimited amount of idling, and getting up delicate little dishes, and dressing just a degree more carefully and becomingly than usual! And yet I thought I should be rather glad when our guests were once fairly gone, and mother returned, and we settled down once more, peacefully prepared to meet the raids of winter.

Well! the parting day came at last; but I must tell of a scene that took place on it.

"Oh, there! I cannot bear the look of the boxes in the hall," said Lucy, hurrying into the drawing-room, where sat M. Adolphe. "Of all dreary things, parting must be the very worst!"

"No doubt it is a very trying thing to the affections," returned M. Adolphe: "unless we can arrange it like your scissors, and part to meet again."

"Ah, but we are never likely to meet again," sighed Lucy. "We never met before, you see," she added, convincingly.

"But there are ways in which it could be arranged," he said, looking at Lucy, who stood in the sunshine.

"I don't know of any, M. Adolphe. Except, indeed—the seaside! We really might do *that!*"

"That is one good way, no doubt. You cannot think of any other?"

"Oh, yes, of course—writing! And Madame Adolphe is going to write sometimes to Helen; so after all it is not so very bad."

"But Madame Adolphe stays at present in England, and I go back to France. Her letters will be no good to me. Cannot you think of any way to help me? Well, if you cannot, I think I can."

The Frenchman's white teeth were shown freely under his moustache, as he continued to smile at Lucy.

"What is your way?" asked she.

"That you should come back with me to France, and make me the happiest man in all the universe by becoming my wife! Don't be frightened at what I say. My brother made the very best of husbands; and I have admired and loved you ever since you wanted to turn me out of the house that stormy night."

"But, oh!—dear me! who was to dream of this!" said Lucy, dropping into a chair.

"You think too little of yourself," said the Frenchman, gallantly, "or you would have seen my love for you long ago; and my regard and esteem are equal to my love. Your heart is too tender, is it not, to put me to the distress and chagrin of a refusal? This little hand I feel sure will give itself to me!" and taking her hand, he pressed a most deferential kiss upon it.

"Oh! if you are sure you really want it!—But I am so silly and unfit—perhaps I shall not make a good wife, and then it would all be disappointment!"

"I am not afraid," he returned. "We will take our chance of that, if you will say I am not displeasing to you for a husband."

"No, not displeasing at all—you could not be *that!*" said Lucy, and then ——

What happened then I have every reason to know. For I and Helen, with Dr. Hudson, chanced to enter, and found M. Adolphe kissing, not Lucy's hand, but, "without rebuke," her face!

We all stood aghast for a moment! But Mephistopheles (the old name recurred to me just then) instantly recovered his presence of mind. He drew Lucy's arm within his, and advanced to address us.

"Let me introduce you to the future Madame Victor Adolphe!"

The exclamations of surprise, the smiles, congratulations, questions, accusations, that followed, got mixed up in inextricable confusion; but at last I became aware that Dr. Hudson, with a look of annoyance on his face, was attacking his brother-in-law.

"I protest against this proceeding. I do, indeed," he said. "If it were not that you have one such excellent excuse in your favour," indicating Lucy, "I should call you severely to task. Until Mrs. Murray, whose hospitality we should have been the last to abuse, had returned home, I think it was unbecoming and abominable—and I warned you so beforehand—to act as you have done."

"Mais, mon ami," said M. Adolphe, shrugging his shoulders, with a smile of triumphant unconcern, "this act was not quite premeditated. In affairs of the heart one does not always do what one intended. The feelings get too many for one, and one cannot stop to think whether Mrs. Murray is at home or not."

"The best and truest love keeps mastery over itself even at the cost of misunderstanding and pain. But there," added Dr. Hudson, hurriedly changing into a lighter tone, as if half ashamed of his own language, "the thing is done, only I call all to witness I consider it done amiss. Surely, brought up under the laws of your own nation, one might have thought there was less danger of your transgressing than of any Englishman—to say the least of it."

"But why so," returned M. Adolphe, "when your law permits that I speak to Miss Lucy without reserve? No — I think we managed particularly well," he concluded, saucily.

"Oh, but I am afraid," sighed Lucy, trying to get possession of her own hand, "that I ought not to have answered without Aunt Bessie. Oh, dear me, you are taking the scapegoat of the family after all, M. Adolphe!" Lucy meant scapegrace, but it did just as well for M. Adolphe.

"There, get away with you," said Dr. Hudson, giving his brother-in-law a vigorous but friendly push; "it is you who are in fault, not Miss Lucy! Right sorry I am that I ever brought you here!"

"Nay, it was *I* brought you," said M. Adolphe, "and the best lover is the best warrior, and I am the happiest man in creation."

A few hurried resolutions were come to then and there. Dr. Hudson protested that until our mother's return there should be no further steps taken in the matter: no engagement. I was almost surprised at his strictness, but Aunt Judith agreed with him.

So they really went away at last, and it was "with a difference" as far as we were concerned. Gone away to Croome.

It was a fortnight after this before my mother was settled at home again. M. Adolphe came over then and Dr. Hudson with him. No

difficulty was made by the mother, for M. Adolphe was an excellent parti in all respects. I had business abroad that day connected with our parish, and left them settling the weighty questions of dot and all else. M. Adolphe was strolling up and down the shady drive on my return.

"Everything has been decided—and everything goes well," he said. "We are to be married the first week in December, and I am very well content. You do not consider my future wife very wise, I think," said he, perhaps in answer to my surprised look. "What matters it? I will be wise for both of us. I want her to be exactly as she is, neither more nor less. But to hear my brother-in-law speak, one might say I was fit for transportation. I was mean, dishonourable, infamous, knew not how to conduct myself aright! When I saw this heat, and he so cool in general, I began to think there was a reason for it somewhere, Miss Grizel."

"Only an Englishman's view of the case, M. Adolphe."

"Are all Englishmen so particular? You think he has no personal views—that he is so far above the weaknesses and affections of human nature as never to be influenced by them."

"And why would you have me think to the contrary?" I asked—but not without a horrible misgiving that had haunted me before.

"Because we have the laugh against him now," said M. Adolphe, stopping our walk and turning to face me, every feature and gesture in full play. "Since you have been out, he has proposed to your sister Helen and been accepted! He waits until mamma comes back; I speak to Miss Lucy when she has an aunt with her in the house: where lies the great difference between us? I speak a fortnight ago, and he very nearly tells me I am no gentleman for doing so; he speaks to-day, and all of a sudden, everything is en règle and comme il faut. My good friend Hudson was jealous that I was the first to win my bride; he does not quite forgive me that French valour won the day a whole fortnight sooner than English prudence."

It proved to be quite true—and sorry though I was to lose Helen, I could not but be glad to welcome Dr. Hudson as a brother.

Dr. Hudson's keen discernment had quickly seen that Helen was made for a doctor's wife; long experience had taught him, too, that the ready, helpful hand and skilful aid shown to others have their origin in unselfishness and trustworthiness; and so his judgment and his heart went together.

The worst of it all is, that my story has not one grain of a moral in it. For if I were now asked whether we unprotected girls should open our doors on stormy nights to unknown wayfarers in distress, I should feel more perplexed than ever how to answer.

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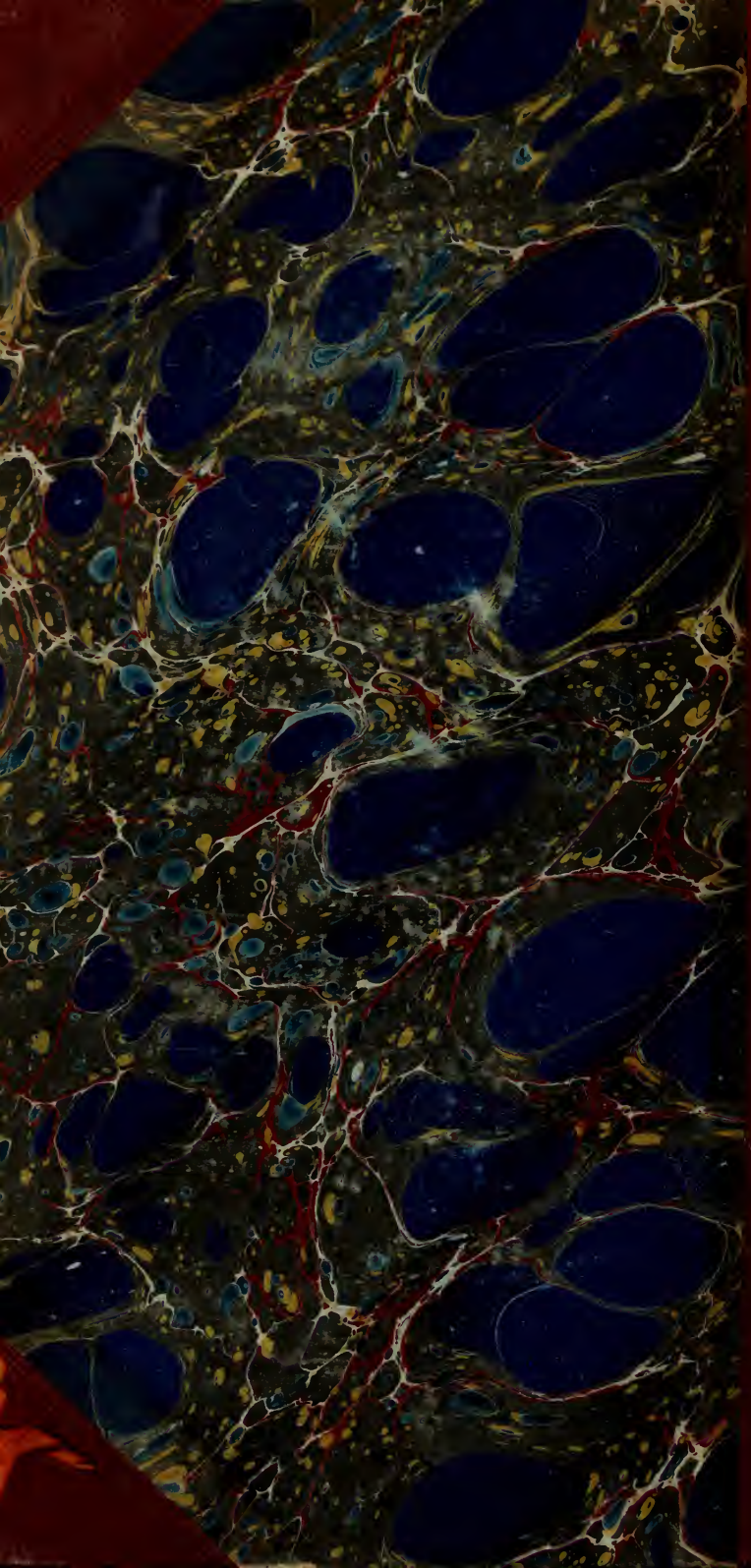
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